

Israel Hayom Friday Mar 22, 2019

Opinions

Haim Rokach | Affirming an ancient bond

In the 52 years that have passed since we acquired the Golan Heights, 34 ancient synagogues from different points in history have been discovered there, far more than anywhere else in the country.

Prof. Eyal Zisser | How the Syrians lost the Golan

Faulty assumptions that time was on Syria's side, along with Assad's utter dependence on the will of his masters in Tehran, led Trump to declare American recognition of Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights.

Tamar Sternthal | New York Times rewrites history of Jaffa

In response to a claim that a feature article on Jaffa ignored the city's Arab history, editors "corrected" it with the misinformation that most Jaffa Arabs were forced out in 1948.

Israel Hayom Friday Mar 22, 2019

Posted:

1967 Israel sovereignty on the Golan Heights recognized by Trump as Purim celebrated

Another wonderful gift from Pennsylvania Avenue

The Jews indeed had "light and gladness" when, as they celebrated Purim, the 45th president of the United States tweeted that America was recognizing Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights • In 1967, the IDF made history there – now it's Trump's turn.

Boaz Bismuth // published on 22/03/2019

A rainbow breaks through the winter rain clouds on the Golan Heights | Photo: Gil Eliyahu / JINI

The day on which we read the eternal sentence from the Book of Esther (8:16): "The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor," which was uttered when salvation arrived after great despair – on that very day, Purim – we learned about another wonderful gift from the 45th president of the U.S., Donald Trump. He was recognizing Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights. Trump, as usual, put the news out on Twitter. A tweet of new heights!

After President Trump's historic tweet, I couldn't help but remember the funeral of former Syrian President Hafez Assad, which I covered in 2000. In the streets of Damascus, I saw Syrian women mourning the dead president, crying, "Who will hold onto the Golan for

us?" I'm sorry to disappoint you, Syrian people, it looks like no one will give you back the Golan.

U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman was interviewed in the Israel Hayom Rosh Hashanah supplement and told diplomatic correspondent Ariel Kahana that he believed the Golan Heights could remain in Israel's hands forever and certainly wouldn't be returned to the current president of Syria, Assad's son Bashar.

I can't imagine a circumstance where the Golan Heights will be returned to Syria. I cannot imagine, frankly, a circumstance where the Golan Heights is not a part of Israel forever. There's not even an indigenous population in the Golan Heights seeking autonomy. ... You'd put Israel at a great security disadvantage by giving up the high ground of the Golan Heights. ... I can't think of a less deserving person to receive this kind of reward than Bashar Assad," Friedman said.

As the American ambassador was saying these important things, Washington and Jerusalem were continuing major diplomatic efforts aimed at securing American recognition of Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights. We need to acknowledge the wonderful work by Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and his colleague from Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, as well as that of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his team.

And we also need to be unafraid to talk about sovereignty, and not only when it comes to defense and security. When you go back to Jewish sources, to the days when Gamla was a Jewish city on the Golan Heights that joined the great revolt at the end of the Second Temple period, we find that Gamla is more than just its winery. But above all, we need to remember that this is a decision that came into being and was made by the leadership echelon. It would not have been possible if there hadn't been someone on Pennsylvania Avenue who was willing to take bold steps.

The people Trump has appointed to his hive, and he, of course, put Israel's security before everything else. Especially given the palpable Iranian threat and Tehran's desire to move closer to Israel's borders on the Golan, and also the fear that Moscow will grow stronger through its support for Bashar Assad. Israel has become not only an asset but also a regional partner of the first rank for Washington.

Through a step like this, Washington is making it clear that it will help anyone who works with America. That has nothing to do with elections, it's about Trump, Netanyahu, and the special bond the two leaders have formed – a bond that is almost unprecedented in the history of Israeli-American relations. Trump wisely placed his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt on the team with Friedman. It looks as if no president ever put so much faith in his peace team, and the latest decision indicates that even when there are no dramatic announcements, they know how to work thoroughly and efficiently. Netanyahu was also wise in fostering direct communication with Trump's team, and of course with Trump himself, even when the rest of the world warned him to cut it out, saying it sounded like "political support."

Of course, after Thursday's tweet, the same old analysts starting talking about Trump helping his friend Netanyahu during an election campaign, and I thought to myself, after Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama and their interference in elections, a prime minister of Israel being a friend of the American president is important. On one channel, someone actually talked about the "bonbons" Washington was handing out to Netanyahu 20 days before the Knesset election. Maybe, just maybe, these are sweets for the State of Israel!

Before catching his flight to the AIPAC conference, Netanyahu spoke with Trump on the phone. "You've made history," he told the president, and he was right. Trump has without a doubt broken the global political stalemate, especially when it comes to the Middle East. After eight years of Obama, did someone mention despair? Then Trump arrived and turned everything around – recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, and now recognizing Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights – and all in the space of two years.

"I don't remember such a volatile campaign in the last 20 years," chairman of the Central Elections Committee Justice Hanan Melcer told Gideon Allon in an interview to the Israel Hayom weekend supplement.

The same media people who on Thursday were wondering about Trump's tweet – both its content and its timing – are the ones who suddenly miss the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin (forgetting what their fathers did to him) and are blaming the Right for the stormy campaign, because it's always the Right's fault.

Maybe now is the time to remind the people missing Begin of Dec. 14, 1981, when his government canceled military rule on the Golan Heights and applied Israeli law there. In 1967, the IDF made history on the Golan for the first time. In 1981, it was Begin. Now, it's Trump.

And to those who will try to spoil the party and remind us that the international community sees the Golan Heights as occupied territory, maybe this is the time to remind them that the name Golan appears for the first time in the Book of Deuteronomy. So we can rejoice. And you, Trump – you're the king!

Israel Hayom Friday Mar 22, 2019

US president recognizes Israeli sovereignty on Golan

The Golan Heights is "of critical strategic and security importance" to Israel and regional stability, says U.S. President Donald Trump • PM Netanyahu to Trump: "You made history" • Russia vows to "never recognize Israeli sovereignty" over the Golan.

Ariel Kahana, News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 22/03/2019

U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem, in July | Photo: AFP

"After 52 years it is time for the United States to fully recognize Israel's Sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which is of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel and Regional Stability!"

With these word posted to his official Twitter page on Thursday, U.S. President Donald Trump continued to make history.

As a reminder, in 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that only the president has the authority to determine American recognition of other countries' sovereignty rights.

The U.S. will be the first country to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan, which the rest of the international community regards as disputed territory occupied by Israel whose status should be determined by negotiations between Israel and Syria. Attempts to bring Israel and Syria to the table have failed. It was not immediately clear how a U.N. peacekeeping force on the Golan might be affected by the U.S. move. That force's mandate expires at the end of June.

There had been signals a decision was coming. Last week, in its annual human rights report, the State Department dropped the phrase "Israeli-occupied" from the Golan Heights section, instead calling it "Israeli-controlled."

Israeli leaders were quick to welcome the president's historic decision.

Over the phone, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Trump, "You made history."

Netanyahu also tweeted: "At a time when Iran seeks to use Syria as a platform to destroy Israel, President Trump boldly recognizes Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights." He added: "Thank you President Trump!"

At a press conference Thursday with the visiting U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Netanyahu said: "The message that President Trump has given the world is that America stands by Israel."

The belief in Israel is that the administration will make the decision official next week, during Netanyahu's scheduled visit to the U.S. to attend the upcoming American Israel Public Affairs Committee conference in Washington, where he will also meet with Trump on Monday afternoon and Tuesday evening for an official state dinner.

Zvika Hauser, chairman of the Coalition for the Israeli Golan and a Knesset candidate for the Blue and White party, thanked Trump and Netanyahu, his party's main rival. "Amid the genocide in Syria, the U.S. president has chosen to stand for historical truth and justice. Trump and Netanyahu deserve thanks. On this day, politics are dwarfed by [the making] of history," he said.

Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon also thanked Trump.

"We are at the beginning of a historic moment for the State of Israel. President Trump once again proves the strength of the alliance between the U.S. and Israel," he said. "The time has come for the world to recognize that the Golan Heights is an inseparable part of the State of Israel."

Pence: 'America stands with Israel'

Following Trump's announcement, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said on Twitter: "America stands with Israel!"

Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, Jason Greenblatt, tweeted: "Another bold, courageous, and historic decision by [the president] who understands Israel and its security needs. Thank you President Trump for your tremendous leadership!"

Senator Lindsey Graham, who recently visited the Golan Heights, tweeted, "President Trump's decision to recognize the Golan as part of Israel is strategically wise and overall awesome. Now I, along with Senator @tedcruz, will try to get Congress to follow your lead."

Cruz himself said, "I applaud [Trump] for taking the long overdue step of recognizing Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights."

AIPAC also issued a statement, saying: "Given current political and security circumstances in Syria, we have said it was inconceivable to imagine Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. [Trump's] statement marks a dramatic change in American policy, and we appreciate his leadership on this issue."

However, the left-wing J Street lobby condemned Trump's decision.

While the organization acknowledged that the Golan Heights is a strategic asset for Israel, "premature U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan is a needlessly

provocative move that violates international law and does not enhance Israeli security," said J Street President Jeremy Ben-Ami.

He added: "It's clear that this cynical move by Trump is not about the long-term interests of the U.S. or Israel, but rather about handing yet another political gift to Prime Minister Netanyahu in the hopes of boosting his chances for re-election next month."

Russia, meanwhile, said Thursday that it will never follow in Trump's footsteps.

"Russia will never recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Trump is damaging to the international community and to the Arab world," said Oleg Morozov, member of the Federation Council's Foreign Affairs Committee.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Friday that a change in the status of the Golan Heights would be a direct violation of United Nations decisions.

Israel Hayom Friday Mar 22, 2019

Muslim world condemns Trump's Golan Heights decision

Syria decries "the blind bias of the United States to the Zionist entity" • Iran lambasts "this illegal and unacceptable recognition" • Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan says Trump's declaration has brought the region to the edge of a new crisis.

News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 22/03/2019

Syrian President Bashar Assad with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran, in February | Photo: AP

Syria condemned on Friday U.S. President Donald Trump's abrupt declaration that Washington will recognize Israel's sovereignty over the disputed Golan Heights, calling the statement "irresponsible."

A Syrian Foreign Ministry statement said that Trump's comments confirm "the blind bias of the United States to the Zionist entity," referring to Israel.

It added that Trump's statement won't change "the fact that the Golan was and will remain Arab and Syrian."

"The Syrian nation is more determined to liberate this precious piece of Syrian national land through all available means," the statement said.

Trump's announcement the day before was a major shift in American policy.

An Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said on Friday that Trump's decision was "unacceptable."

"This illegal and unacceptable recognition does not change the fact that it belongs to Syria," spokesman Bahram Qasemi said.

Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said Trump's announcement was "completely beyond international law," adding that "The Arab League stands fully behind the Syrian right to its occupied land."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on Friday that Trump's declaration has brought the region to the edge of a new crisis.

In a speech at a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Erdoğan said: "It cannot be expected that Turkey and [the OIC] will remain silent or will bow to such a fait accompli on this sensitive matter. We cannot allow the legitimization of the occupation of the Golan Heights and we never will."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said on Twitter that Turkey "supports Syria's territorial integrity." He said Washington's "attempts to legitimize Israel's illegal acts will only lead to more violence in the region."

Israel Hayom Friday Mar 22, 2019

UN rights forum condemns Israel's use of force in Gaza protests

Anti-Israel resolution cites "apparent intentional use of unlawful lethal and other excessive force" in quelling violent Gaza border riots • Israel has opened criminal investigations into the deaths of some of the Palestinians killed during the clashes.

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 22/03/2019

Weekly demonstrations on the Gaza border, organized by Hamas, often devolve into violent clashes | Photo: AFP

The United Nations Human Rights Council on Friday condemned Israel's "apparent intentional use of unlawful lethal and other excessive force" against civilian protesters in Gaza and called for perpetrators of all violations in the strip to face justice.

The Geneva forum adopted a resolution on accountability, brought by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, by a vote of 23 states in favor, eight against with 15 abstentions.

European countries were divided. The United States does not participate, having quit the body last year over perceived anti-Israel bias.

The text was based on a report by a U.N. inquiry which alleged that Israeli security forces may have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in killing 189 Palestinians and wounding more than 6,100 at weekly protests last year, which are instigated by Hamas.

Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, has admitted that dozens of the casualties in the clashes were members of its organization, rather than innocent civilians.

Last week, Israeli authorities opened criminal investigations into the deaths of 11 Palestinians who were killed during protests along the Gaza border over the past year.

A senior Israeli official briefed journalists in Geneva to rebut allegations contained in the U.N. human rights report.

The official said full-fledged criminal investigations in such cases are opened if "reasonable grounds" of suspicion of criminal misconduct are found.

"If we find somebody violated the law, there will be consequences, but a war crime has to be intentional."

Under Israeli rules of engagement, live fire can be used only if there is a real and imminent threat from individuals or a mob, and only as a last resort, the official said.

"Each and every bullet received authorization of an experienced commander at the scene," he said.

Israel Hayom Friday Mar 22, 2019

Submarine affair could sink the Blue and White party

Case 3,000's revival may be keeping the focus away from Benny Gantz's hacked phone, this submarine may ultimately bring Blue and White down with it • A faux perfume ad indicates the next Knesset will focus its attention on the justice system.

Mati Tuchfeld // published on 22/03/2019

Blue and White leader Benny Gantz | Photo: Gideon Markowicz

The way things look, the submarine affair threatens to take with it the election campaign of the Blue and White party, which last week chained its fate to that of Case 3,000. Israelis have barely had a chance to form an opinion on Blue and White party leader Benny Gantz's unusual media blitz, in which in interviews he gave to three different TV channels, in which the central and in fact only case he made was one against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's his involvement in the affair. Yet we are already hearing reports of the collapse of the central testimony in the case, which may lead to the collapse of the case in its entirety.

The revival of the submarine case has succeeded in drawing attention away from the scandal over Gantz's hacked cellphone and for the first time has enabled Blue and White to force Netanyahu to respond to their election campaign agenda and not the other way around, as has been the case up until now. But the case is unlikely to guarantee the party, which aspires to lead the government, success on Election Day.

Those who are disgusted by Netanyahu's conduct are no longer in the Likud. Those who abandoned the party did not wait for the submarine case. They made their decision after hearing about Cases 1,000, 2,000 and 4,000 – if not during the investigation, then when the police recommended an indictment. And if they didn't leave Likud then, they did when the attorney general announced his intention to indict.

What are the chances that Likud voters who supported Netanyahu, sticking by him after the decision to file an indictment pursuant to a hearing on charges that include bribery, suddenly decide to abandon the party in disgust after the joint interview with Gantz, Lapid and Ya'alon on the submarine affair? Those Likud voters that were swayed by the interview are likely few and far between, which is why the decision by Blue and White – a political party that seeks to lead the next government – to make the submarine affair a central campaign issue is a puzzling one.

Bigger fish to fry

Case 3000 appears to be a puzzling affair in and of itself. While the use of state's witnesses has always been a controversial subject in Israel and around the world, given their excessive use in the Netanyahu case, it seems Case 3,000 has done more than any other previous case to violate all the accepted norms.

A society that encourages the use of state's witnesses damages the social fabric at its most basic level. People will not be able to trust their friends, managers will not be able to trust their employees, and consumers will not be able to trust service providers. Any first-year teacher knows that if you encourage students to tattletale, you may know everything about everyone but the class will be completely destroyed. The same is true of the state.

The only moral justification for acquiring the testimony of a state's witness is when faced with the threat of a mafia or a criminal gang. In a situation where you have bigger fish to fry, it is better to catch a small fish and offer them protection.

But with Case 3,000, the exact opposite has happened. They caught Miki Ganor, the former Israeli representative of German shipbuilder Thyssenkrupp and the man who, according to their suspicions, was the archcriminal, the mastermind behind the affair and the one who raked in the big bucks from the deal, and used him as a state's witness to catch smaller fish that they suspected had served as mediators in the deal, removing barriers to the transaction and so forth.

This puzzling move can only be explained by assuming the decision to protect Ganor did not stem from a need to catch the small fish but rather from their assessment that he would get them an even bigger fish to fry. And no, I'm not talking about the former commander of Israel's navy, but the biggest shark out there: Netanyahu.

It was so clear to the investigators and senior police officials that the trail would lead to Netanyahu that they did not hesitate to call the investigation "Case 3,000," in direct continuation of Cases 1,000 and 2,000 which did focus on the prime minister, and Case 4,000 that followed. From the first moment the media reported on the case, the submarine affair was presented as a new Netanyahu scandal. The person who has nurtured this case ever since then – Moshe Ya'alon – is motivated by his desire to take down Netanyahu. Not former Israeli Navy commander Eli Marom. Not former Netanyahu bureau chief David Shiran. No, not even Netanyahu's cousin and former personal attorney David Shimron.

'Revenge vote'

Alongside the desire to bring down Netanyahu, it seems Ya'alon has also been negatively impacted by the prime minister's decision to acquire the submarines contrary to his recommendation. But what started out as the personal agenda of a political candidate who wasn't going to pass the electoral threshold last week became the central campaign issue of what looks to be Israel's largest party, according to the polls. Lapid was only too happy to join Ya'alon in his efforts, and together, the two dragged Gantz and Ashkenazi into

making this issue the principal focus of the election campaign of Blue and White, a bizarre move by party that sees itself as a viable and realistic alternative to an incumbent prime minister if there ever was one.

While it remains unclear how the election will turn out, one thing about the next Knesset is for certain: The Israeli justice system will be a central topic of discussion. The High Court of Justice's decision to disqualify Otzma Yehudit party leader Michael Ben-Ari and approve the Balad party was a groundbreaking decision by the court that showed it was not obligated to the dominant public discourse; High Court justices did not try to justify themselves or feign the appearance of equality in their decision.

From the Knesset's standpoint, this move by the court will be the most significant catalyst in regulating the relationship between the various government authorities, there being a growing consensus in favor of diminishing the High Court's power. Even Kulanu party leader Moshe Kahlon, who in his past term would not even broach the subject, has recently been singing a different tune.

The court's decision also negatively impacts the New Right's election campaign, in party leader and Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked has attempted to present herself as the figure that has introduced the most significant reforms to the court in recent years. The leftist attacks on her, in particular over her faux Fascism perfume ad, and the controversy it stoked, serve her goals, but every High Court ruling that has followed has served to dismantle her agenda by teaching us that what once was will continue to be.

It's not for nothing that the Union of Right-Wing Parties and even Likud are trying to present Shaked's efforts as lacking. Bezalel Smotrich and Rabbi Rafi Peretz's party did not hesitate to announce that in the next government, they would demand the Education and Justice ministries, which are, coincidentally, the ministries now run by Shaked and her fellow New Right party leader Naftali Bennett.

The growing discourse among right-wing voters is one of a "revenge vote." Those who didn't want Ben-Ari in the Knesset, they say, will get Smotrich and Otzma Yehudit's Itamar Ben-Gvir in a 12-seat party. There is talk of moderate right-wing voters switching over to their faction merely to prove to the High Court justices that they won't be allowed to decide what is best for the voters.

Israel Hayom Friday Mar 22, 2019

Khamenei: Iran will boost defense capabilities despite US pressure

In speech on state TV, Ayatollah Khamenei says, "We need to take Iran to a point that the enemy understands that it cannot threaten Iran. ... America's sanction will make Iran self-sufficient" • Says Western countries have "proved they cannot be trusted."

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff // published on **22/03/2019**

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei waves his hand as he delivers a speech on the first day of Persian New Year, also known as Nowruz in Mashhad, northeast of Tehran, Thursday | Photo: Khamenei.ir via Reuters

Iran is determined to boost its defense capabilities despite mounting pressure from the United States and its allies to curb its ballistic missile program, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Thursday.

"We need to take Iran to a point that [the] enemy understands that they cannot threaten Iran. ... America's sanctions will make Iran self-sufficient," Khamenei said in a speech broadcast live on state TV.

U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States last May from a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six major powers, saying it gave too much away to Iran, and reimposed far-reaching U.S. sanctions.

The U.S. sanctions aim to force Iran to accept tougher restrictions on its nuclear work, drop its ballistic missile program and scale back support for militant proxies in Middle East conflicts from Yemen to Syria.

Iran says its missile program is purely defensive and has rejected the curbs on it demanded by the United States. Tehran says it has missiles with a range of up to 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles), which puts Israel and U.S. military bases in the region within reach.

The other signatories to the nuclear deal – Germany, France, Britain, the European Union, Russia and China – have remained committed to the agreement and have been trying to salvage the pact by a mechanism to circumvent Trump's sanctions.

Khamenei, a hardliner who has the ultimate say on all major foreign and domestic policy in the Islamic republic, said the European signatories of the deal had failed to maintain Iran's economic interests.

"They have always stabbed Iran in the back. ... The Western countries have proved they cannot be trusted," he said in the speech in the holy Shiite city of Mashhad.

Iranian leaders have threatened to exit the nuclear deal unless the European powers enable Tehran to receive economic benefits.

"This mechanism set by the Europeans is like a bitter joke," Khamenei said, referring to a channel opened by the European signatories of the deal for nondollar trade with Iran to get around the U.S. sanction.

Newsletter Thursday March 21, 2019

Posted:

Donald Trump will host Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House Monday and Tuesday

Opinions

Assaf Malach | The Book of Esther and the dawn of Zionism
Jewish sovereignty seemed as impossible in the 19th century as it did in the Persian Empire. That doesn't mean that the Zionist movement never envisioned a state.

Dr. Haim Shine | The Left's rookies rehash old allegations
The Blue and White party has decided to bring Case 3,000 back to the limelight with the help of media heavyweights. This is intended to make the embarrassing report on Gantz's hacked phone go away.

Sean Durns | Congressional anti-Semitism is allowed to slide
With concern over anti-Semitism in the U.S. growing, the media's failure to provide full and honest reporting about anti-Semitism in Congress is more than inexplicable – it's unacceptable.

Newsletter Thursday March 21, 2019

PM lauds Trump for 'bold' recognition of Israeli Golan

"After 52 years it is time for the United States to fully recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights," Trump tweets • "You've made history," Netanyahu tells Trump in phone call after the announcement • Two leaders set to meet next week.

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 21/03/2019

The Israeli side of the Golan Heights | Photo: Reuters

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday it was time to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, marking a dramatic shift in U.S. policy and giving a boost to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"After 52 years it is time for the United States to fully recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which is of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel and regional stability!" Trump wrote on Twitter.

Netanyahu thanked Trump for the Golan Heights gesture. "You've made history," Netanyahu told Trump in a phone call after the announcement, according to Netanyahu's office.

"At a time when Iran seeks to use Syria as a platform to destroy Israel, President Trump boldly recognizes Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Thank you President Trump! @realDonaldTrump," Netanyahu wrote in a tweet.

Netanyahu has been pressing for the United States to recognize Israel's claim to sovereignty over the Golan Heights and raised that possibility in his first White House meeting with Trump in February 2017.

Israel captured the area from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War. It gave back a small sliver of the land as part of a 1974 separation of forces agreement and annexed it in 1981.

The prime minister had been expected to raise the issue again with Trump during his visit to Washington, an Israeli official said.

Newsletter Thursday March 21, 2019

Egyptian proposal: Gaza will demilitarize if blockade is lifted

Plan would see Israel, Egypt lift blockade on coastal enclave, open maritime channel to allow for import, export of goods from Gaza Strip port • Egyptians expect "strong resistance" to demilitarization plan from PLO, armed Palestinian groups in Gaza.

Daniel Siryoti // published on 21/03/2019

Palestinian rioters clash with IDF forces the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip on March 8 | Photo: EPA

A new Egyptian proposal would see the Gaza Strip demilitarized in return for Israel and Egypt lifting the blockade currently in place and a series of international projects to improve the situation in the coastal enclave, Egyptian security forces and senior Palestinian officials in Gaza and Ramallah report.

According to the plan, the Palestinian organizations, under the leadership of either Hamas or an umbrella political group representing all the organizations in Gaza, would remain in charge of internal affairs in the Gaza Strip through the use of the security mechanisms already in place in there.

The plan would allow some light weaponry to remain in Gaza to be used mostly for domestic security purposes. The number of those weapons would be reduced and strictly monitored.

Once these steps were implemented, Israeli and Egypt would lift their blockade on Gaza and introduce large-scale infrastructure, employment, economic, health, and education projects. Project funding would come from the U.N., the EU, and Arab states, in particular the Persian Gulf states. The proposed plan would also see the opening of a maritime channel to a port in Gaza, which in its first stages would allow Gaza to directly import and export goods.

According to Egyptian security officials as well as senior Palestinian officials in Gaza and Ramallah, Jerusalem and Cairo have come to realize that Hamas is not going anywhere. They say that Egypt and Israel have also come to terms with the fact that the Palestinian Authority will be hard-pressed to return to power in Gaza, either under a Palestinian unity agreement or as a result of the collapse of the Hamas regime in light of the dire humanitarian situation and the continued military conflict with Israel.

The Egyptian sources emphasized that the IDF policy of containment when it comes to Gaza is due to Jerusalem's desire to avoid the collapse of the Hamas regime. They said Israel fears that if Hamas were toppled, radical pro-Iranian or Salafist organizations identified with the Islamic State group would fill the power vacuum.

The prevailing assessment in Israel and in Egypt is that the proposal could be implemented in three to five years and that the main obstacle would be Hamas' and the other armed Palestinian factions' opposition to demilitarization.

The Palestine Liberation Organization and the PA in Ramallah are also likely to oppose the move, since they view demilitarizing Gaza as mainly serving Israel's interests, which they fear include the dissolution of the vision of an independent Palestinian state. According to senior officials in Ramallah, PA President Mahmoud Abbas and the PLO leadership would agree to the demilitarization of Hamas and the other factions in Gaza on the condition the PA was put in control of the enclave and tasked with leading the project.

At any rate, officials in Cairo and Jerusalem are inclined to see the nascent agreement in a positive light, and the U.S. security echelon has received drafts of the plan compiled by Israeli and Egyptian teams.

A senior Egyptian security official said, "We are now waiting for the new government that will be elected in Israel in order to speed up the process, with the goal following the elections in Israel being to involve other influential Arab states such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Persian Gulf states."

He said, "If Abu Mazen [Abbas] and the leadership in Ramallah do not pile on the obstacles, it will be possible to carry out the plan with the full cooperation of all the regional factors through the provision of guarantees and aid from the international community."

But the source admitted there would likely be "strong resistance to the plan for the demilitarization of the [Gaza] Strip, both on the part of the PLO and the armed factions in Gaza especially."

Newsletter Thursday March 21, 2019

Posted:

Donald Trump will host Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House Monday and Tuesday

Trump to host PM Netanyahu at White House next week

White House announces U.S. President Trump, PM Netanyahu to discuss "countries' shared interests and actions in the Middle East" • Officials in Jerusalem hope Trump will officially recognize the Israeli Golan Heights during their meeting.

Ariel Kahana, Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 21/03/2019

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump in the White House in 2017 | Photo: AP

U.S. President Donald Trump will host Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House next Monday and Tuesday, the White House said, reaffirming the two leaders' close ties.

The announcement came shortly after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo landed in Tel Aviv on Wednesday and planned to deliver remarks alongside Netanyahu.

"The president and the prime minister will discuss their countries' shared interests and actions in the Middle East during a working meeting on March 25," the White House said in a statement. Trump will host a dinner for Netanyahu on Tuesday night.

"Relations with the United States have never been this strong," Netanyahu said in a speech earlier Wednesday.

Officials in Jerusalem hope that during their meeting, Trump will officially recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

On a tour of the strategic plateau last week, U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham vowed to work toward recognition of the Israeli Golan Heights.

Netanyahu planned to visit Washington next week to address the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, two weeks before the Israeli election on April 9.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, Pompeo and former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley are also set to address the event. According to reports, Trump is also weighing addressing the conference.

The Israeli representatives expected to speak at the AIPAC conference include Education Minister and New Right party leader Naftali Bennett; Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi; Likud MK Amir Ohana; Labor MKs Stav Shaffir and Merav Michaeli; as well as top Blue and White party officials Benny Gantz, Yair Lapid and Moshe Ya'alon.

Newsletter Thursday March 21, 2019

Netanyahu, Pompeo talk energy with Cypriot, Greek leaders

Meeting focuses on cooperation, including upcoming East-Med gas pipeline between Israel and Europe • PM Benjamin Netanyahu: Israeli-Cypriot-Greek work on everything from firefighting to energy "one of the best regional associations in the world."

JNS and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 21/03/2019

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras | Photo: Amos Ben Gershom / GPO

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras at the David Citadel Hotel in Jerusalem on Wednesday to discuss cooperation between the countries, including the upcoming East-Med pipeline connecting Israel and the European Union.

"This is the sixth summit meeting between Israel, Cyprus and Greece. We began this a few years ago, and it's blossomed into one of the best regional associations in the world," said Netanyahu.

"We cooperate in everything, from firefighting now to energy," Netanyahu said.

"We are planning to lay down a pipeline called the East-Med Pipeline, from Israel, through Cyprus, through Greece, to Europe, something that will benefit our economies greatly, provide stability for the region and prosperity to our peoples, but also we think would diversify the energy supplies to Europe," Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu added that Pompeo's participation "signifies the fact that the United States supports this regional effort, and it has many, many facets that we're going to discuss. And I think that it says that this is something for the long haul."

Earlier Wednesday, Pompeo met one-on-one with Netanyahu to discuss the Iranian threat.

Newsletter Thursday March 21, 2019

Analysis: Bringing the submarines to surface is a coup

Blue and White is the only party thus far that has managed to put PM Netanyahu on the defensive, a position he does not enjoy • Still, there might not be any actual winner or loser from reviving the submarines affair, but mostly just headlines and spin.

Mati Tuchfeld // published on 21/03/2019

A new Israeli Navy submarine arrives from Germany | Photo: IDF Spokesperson's Unit

The revival of the submarines affair (Case 3,000) by the leaders of the Blue and White party marks the first time that any party, other than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud and possibly Zehut under Moshe Feiglin, has managed to declare a major agenda in this election campaign.

While it's true that the claims sound a little forced and the leaks about a possible investigation sound more like spin by the State Attorney's Office, they have managed to put Netanyahu on the defensive, and given that no one has been able to do that until now, it's not a bad coup for them.

But a campaign win is far from an election victory. Netanyahu doesn't like to defend himself and when he's forced to, he prefers to attack. The press conference he delivered on Wednesday with chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Avi Dichter was designed to force Blue and White to return to a defensive position.

Netanyahu delivered a below-the-belt blow to Blue and White leader Benny Gantz. For the next few days, we'll probably be hearing a lot about submarines and the Iranians breaking into Gantz's phone. In effect, there might not be any winner or loser, but mostly, just a lot of headlines and spin.

Next week, Netanyahu is due to arrive on his home turf – Washington. There, he knows very well that he has no competitors. Gantz's presence at the AIPAC event and the speech he is scheduled to give there will only underscore the difference between them – and Gantz won't come off well.

The prime minister sees his visit to the U.S. two weeks before the election as an important reminder to the public after the hacked cell phones and the submarines that there is only one person who is head and shoulders above everyone else and who is raising Israel's profile in the world.

We can assume that U.S. President Donald Trump will also go out of his way to please his favorite world leader. By convivial hosting, he will show the people in Zion which Israeli leader he wants to visit.

Newsletter Wednesday March 20, 2019

Posted:

Intel Israel expands from growing chip sales in China: Hungary expands trade with Israel

Opinions

Amnon Lord | Gantz tries to save his campaign

Did Gantz's interview on Tuesday help stop the bleeding? Gantz may have been articulate and interesting but this is just an ideological mask and he lacks the fire in his belly.

Jonathan S. Tobin | To the Left's dismay, Trump helps Netanyahu

President Trump is popular in Israel for good reason. The close relationship that Prime Minister Netanyahu has forged with him makes the majority of American Jews cringe but it's one of the prime minister's chief assets.

Yossi Beilin | Resolution runs through the PA, not Hamas

The pragmatic segment of the Arab world cannot understand why Israel, of all countries, opened a channel of communication with Hamas, granting the organization legitimacy.

Newsletter Wednesday March 20, 2019

Hungary opens diplomatic trade mission in Jerusalem

Mission in Jerusalem will be an extension of Hungarian Embassy in Tel Aviv • "This is a very exciting moment for us because it's the first European diplomatic mission opened in Jerusalem in many decades," says PM Netanyahu at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

JNS and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 20/03/2019

PM Netanyahu with Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó in Jerusalem, Tuesday | Photo: Amos Ben-Gershom / GPO

Hungary opened a diplomatic trade mission in Jerusalem on Tuesday, demonstrating close ties with Israel and becoming the first European country in decades to do so, according to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, along with Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony and unveiled the building's plaque.

The Hungarian diplomatic trade mission in Jerusalem will be an extension of the Hungarian Embassy in Israel in Tel Aviv.

"This is a very exciting moment for us because it's the first European diplomatic mission opened in Jerusalem in many decades, and three Hungarian diplomats are going to be assigned to this office for trade purposes," said Netanyahu. "That's important for trade, for diplomacy and for the move that Hungary is leading right now to change the attitude in Europe towards Jerusalem."

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced the diplomatic trade mission last month while visiting Netanyahu in Israel.

Szijjártó told Netanyahu that Hungary will not follow the European Commission's policy of labeling items that are produced in Judea and Samaria.

"We do not support the list of companies in the settlements to be announced by the high representative of Human Rights of the United Nations," he said, "and we urge for a tighter, better and more dynamic cooperation between Israel and the European Union."

Newsletter Wednesday March 20, 2019

Israel's chip sales to China jump as Intel expands

Israel Export Institute: New data shows semiconductor exports to China jumped 80% last year to \$2.6 billion, with Intel Israel accounting for at least 80% of those sales • Data welcome news for Jerusalem as it pushes for deeper ties with Beijing.

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 20/03/2019

A technician works in a clean room at Mellanox Technologies building in Yokneam, Israel | Photo: Reuters

Israel's exports of computer chips to China soared last year as Chinese companies bought more semiconductors made at Intel's Kiryat Gat plant.

An official at the Israel Export Institute told Reuters that new data showed semiconductor exports to China jumped 80% last year to \$2.6 billion. An industry source told Reuters that Intel Israel accounted for at least 80% of those sales.

The data will be welcome news for the Israeli government as it pushes for deeper ties with China and because semiconductors accounted for \$3.9 billion of overall goods exports in 2018, according to the institute, a government agency.

The two countries have started negotiating a trade deal and technology is expected to be a major part of the discussions. Overall exports of Israeli goods to China, excluding diamonds, rose 50% to \$4.7 billion, statistics.

In 2017, Intel announced a \$5 billion investment to expand capacity in its Kiryat Gat plant in southern Israel, which makes some of the smallest and fastest chips in the world.

That year it also bought Israeli auto-focused chip and technology firm Mobileye for \$15 billion. It said this year it would invest \$11 billion in a new Israeli plant.

A spokesman for Intel **said the firm exported \$3.9 billion** worth of goods **from Israel last year**, up from \$3.6 billion in 2017. He declined to give further details of Intel's operations in Israel.

Chinese officials have said they are looking to develop a domestic chip market because Chinese companies import \$270 billion of semiconductors each year. Israel has a reputation for exporting high-end chips.

Israel's export institute also said **sales to China** of inspection equipment for semiconductor manufacturing jumped 64% to **\$450 million last year**.

That equipment is used to control and inspect manufacturing processes in semiconductor plants and is useful for China as its domestic chip manufacturing increases.

Companies in Israel making such equipment include Orbotech, which was just acquired by fellow semiconductor equipment maker KLA-Tencor of California for about \$3.4 billion.

That deal was announced a year ago but was held up by Chinese regulators, who only gave their approval in February.

Pivot to Asia

China is now Israel's second largest export market for goods after the United States, having overtaken Britain last year.

Sales of semiconductors to the U.S. slipped 20% to \$860 million, contributing to a 3% drop in goods exports. But at \$10.9 billion, overall goods exports still dwarf those to China.

Israel has been pivoting its economy toward Asia in the past few years both because of perceived political hostility in some European countries and the fact that Asian markets are growing rapidly.

In recent years, Chinese-based airlines have started direct flights to Tel Aviv, the two countries signed a visa agreement and are working on the trade deal. Israel is also in talks for free trade agreements with Vietnam and South Korea.

Some analysts in China expect the ties to get stronger due to the tit-for-tat trade war between the United States, a major chip producer, and China.

"Because of the trade war, China and Israel's cooperation is closer than it has been before," said Gu Wenjun, chief analyst at ICWise, a semiconductor consultancy in Shanghai.

"Israel has the technology and China has the market. The space for cooperation is big."

Eyal Waldman, founder and CEO of Israeli chipmaker Mellanox, said his company was benefiting from China's policies.

"In China, they prefer to use Chinese silicon and then after that non-U.S. silicon and only if they don't have that then U.S. silicon, so we are benefiting from that," he told Reuters.

"We are seeing better growth in China."

Mellanox agreed this week to sell itself to California-based chipmaker Nvidia Corp for almost \$7 billion. Intel lost the bidding war to Nvidia. Russell Ellwanger, the CEO of another major chip manufacturer TowerJazz, said his company's growth in China "is very, very strong."



Newsletter Tuesday March 19, 2019

Posted:

Jordan wants Israel ambassador expelled over aggression at Temple Mount holy site

Opinions

Memi Peer | Campaigns are about emotions

Campaigns are about voters' hearts, not their heads, and Prime Minister Netanyahu knows how to command the public's heartstrings even when there is excitement about his rivals.

Dr. Edy Cohen | Gazans want to live

As recent protests against Hamas there show, Gaza is a powder keg. Israel must avoid intervening in the situation in the Gaza Strip to avoid deflecting attention away from the terrorist group.

Aharon Garber | Israel's Supreme Court is left-handed

The Supreme Court used to disqualify right-wing and left-wing candidates according to the same standard. Now it disqualifies only right-wing candidates while letting pro-terrorist Arab parties run.

Newsletter Tuesday March 19, 2019

Jordan wants Israeli envoy expelled over Temple Mount fracas

As tensions at Gate of Mercy continue, Petra news agency reports that Jordan's parliament has recommended expelling Amir Weissbrod over "ongoing Israeli aggression at holy sites" in occupied Jerusalem" and recalling Jordan's ambassador to Israel.

JNS and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 19/03/2019

Palestinians shove their way into an area of the Temple Mount near the Gate of Mercy | Photo: Reuters

Jordanian lawmakers are calling for expelling the Israeli ambassador in Amman, Amir Weissbrod, in retaliation for "ongoing Israel aggression" at Jerusalem's holy sites, including at Al-Aqsa mosque.

"The parliament recommended the government recall the Jordanian ambassador from Israel and expel the Israeli ambassador from Amman to confront the ongoing Israeli aggression at holy sites in occupied Jerusalem," reported the official Petra news agency.

Along with Egypt, Jordan is the only Arab nation to have a peace accord with Israel. Jordan controls access to the Al-Aqsa compound.

On Sunday, an Israeli court ordered the tentative closure of a side building at Al-Aqsa mosque near the Golden Gate – also referred to as the Gate of Mercy – amid fights lately between worshippers and Israeli police.

Jordan slammed the ruling, as its foreign ministry remarked that Israel would bear "full responsibility for the dangerous consequences" behind the decision.

Newsletter Tuesday March 19, 2019

Iran's Rouhani urges Iranians to 'put all your curses' on Israel, US

In attempt to deflect criticism of his performance amid spiraling economy, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani tells Iranians to "put all your curses on those who created the current situation," saying the U.S., "the Zionists" and Saudi Arabia were to blame.

Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 19/03/2019

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani | Photo: AP

Iran's president on Monday urged Iranians to put a curse on the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia, reiterating his long-standing charge that the U.S. and its allies are responsible for the country's ailing economy.

President Hassan Rouhani's remarks were meant to deflect criticism of his administration's performance amid a spiraling economy after U.S. President Donald Trump last year abandoned the nuclear deal and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran, targeting Iran's vital oil sector.

"Put all your curses on those who created the current situation," Rouhani urged Iranians, adding that "the United States, the Zionists" and Saudi Arabia were to blame. He didn't say what kind of curses the Iranians should invoke.

The U.S. plan, Rouhani claimed, was to "dominate" the Iranian nation, something Washington will not achieve.

On Sunday, the same day he inaugurated a new phase in the development of a massive natural gas field, Rouhani said Iran's inflation is "above 20%" and that in the country of

80 million people, more than 3 million unemployed.

He promised to increase wages in both the government and the private sectors and raise pensions.

The crisis has hurt ordinary Iranians and emboldened Rouhani's critics to openly call for his ouster. Rouhani, who first came to power in 2013, was re-elected for a second term in 2017, promising to improve the economy and foster more open relations with the world.

Newsletter Monday March 18, 2019

Posted:

UN alarmed by brutal beating by Gaza protestors, of investigating journalists and staff

Opinions

Dror Eydar | The court's double standard

The Supreme Court's disqualification of Michael Ben-Ari while approving Balad and Ofer Cassif is based on a double standard and severely damages the public's trust in the legal process.

Amnon Lord | In Israel, anti-Semitism is legal

When a Jew says unpleasant things, those messages get amplified. When MKs who call themselves doctors call for terrorist attacks, everyone just moves on.

Meir Indor | Responsibility and unity even when the blood boils

It's easy to focus solely on the conduct of the soldiers before and during Sunday's terrorist attack but we must remember that families lost their loved ones and another man is fighting for his life.

Newsletter Monday March 18, 2019

UN alarmed by brutal beating of journalists and staff from Gaza protestors

UN Mideast envoy condemns Hamas crackdown on protests

Nickolay Mladenov especially alarmed by "brutal beating" of journalists and human rights workers at protests over recent tax hikes • "Long-suffering people of Gaza" have a right to protest "the dire economic situation" without fear of reprisal, he says.

Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 18/03/2019

Hamas gunmen in the Gaza Strip | Archives: AFP

United Nations Mideast envoy Nickolay Mladenov on Sunday condemned Gaza's Hamas rulers for violently cracking down on popular protests over the past few days.

Mladenov, the U.N. special coordinator for Middle East peace, said he was especially alarmed by the "brutal beating of journalists and staff from the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) and the raiding of homes."

Driven by Hamas tax hikes and the desperation of living under Egyptian-Israeli blockade, hundreds of Palestinians have rallied under the slogan "We want to live" to protest the rising cost of living in the coastal enclave.

Cellular phone videos posted on social media also showed Hamas security forces beating protesters with clubs, and gunshots could be heard.

"The long-suffering people of Gaza" have a right to protest "the dire economic situation" without fear of reprisal, Mladenov said.

"I strongly condemn the campaign of arrests and violence used by Hamas security forces against protesters, including women and children, in Gaza over the past three days," he added.

Rights groups in Gaza said several of their employees were beaten or detained by Hamas police while monitoring the protests.

Organizers of the demonstrations, who have kept their identities hidden from the public, said in a statement that protesters were exercising their right to freedom of expression under Palestinian law.

Tahseen Astal, a member of the Gaza Journalists' Syndicate, said Hamas forces had assaulted dozens of local Palestinian journalists and four were hospitalized for their injuries. He said Hamas police had raided journalists' homes following their posts on social media and that seven remained in custody.

Most of Gaza's two million people live in poverty. Its economy has been impacted by blockades by Israel and Egypt – with both countries citing security concerns – and disputes between Hamas and the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority.

Hamas has accused the security services of the rival Fatah movement, the main faction in the Palestinian Authority, of masterminding the protests in an attempt to weaken it. Fatah officials have denied the allegation.

The Palestinian Authority has been imposing economic sanctions in Gaza to try to force Hamas, which seized the enclave in 2007, to implement a power-sharing agreement.

In a bid to boost Hamas government revenues, Gaza's economy ministry slapped additional fees on imports, leading to a hike in food prices, a local economist said.

Newsletter Monday March 18, 2019

Born into al-Qaida: Hamza bin Laden's rise to prominence

Much remains unknown about the **son of Osama bin Laden** – particularly, the key question of where he is – but his life has mirrored al-Qaida's path, moving quietly and steadily forward, outlasting its offshoot and rival, the Islamic State group.

Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff // published on **18/03/2019**

The U.S. State Department-issued bounty for Hamza bin Laden | Photo: U.S. State Department

The boy is only 12 years old and looks even younger and smaller kneeling next to the wreckage of a helicopter, flanked by masked jihadis carrying Kalashnikov assault rifles with bandoliers strapped across their chests.

Hamza bin Laden, with a traditional Arab coffee pot to his right and a rocket-propelled grenade launcher to his left leaning against the debris, made his worldwide television debut reciting a poem in a propaganda video just weeks after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks planned by his father Osama.

Years after the death of his father at the hands of a U.S. Navy SEAL raid in Pakistan, it is now Hamza bin Laden who finds himself squarely in the crosshairs of world powers. In rapid succession in recent weeks, the U.S. put a bounty of up to \$1 million for him; the U.N. Security Council named him to a global sanctions list, sparking a new Interpol notice for his arrest; and his home country of Saudi Arabia revealed it had revoked his citizenship.

Those measures suggest that international officials believe the **now 30-year-old** terrorist is an increasingly serious threat. He is not the head of al-Qaida but he has risen in

prominence within the terror network his father founded, and the group may be grooming him to stand as a leader for a young generation of jihadists.

"Hamza was destined to be in his father's footsteps," said Ali Soufan, a former FBI agent focused on counterterrorism who investigated al-Qaida's attack on the USS Cole. "He is poised to have a senior leadership role in al-Qaida."

Much remains unknown about him – particularly, the key question of where he is – but his life has mirrored al-Qaida's path, moving quietly and steadily forward, outlasting its offshoot and rival, the Islamic State group.

'Living, breathing' al-Qaida

Hamza bin Laden's exact date of birth remains disputed, but most put it in 1989. That was a year of transition for his father, who had gained attention for his role in supplying money and arms to the mujahedeen fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Osama bin Laden himself was one of over 50 children of a wealthy, royally connected construction magnate in the kingdom.

As the war wound down, bin Laden emerged as the leader of a new group that sought to leverage that global network brought together in Afghanistan for a new jihad. They named it al-Qaida, or "the base" in Arabic.

Already, bin Laden had met and married Khairiah Saber, a child psychologist from Saudi Arabia's port city of Jiddah who reportedly had treated bin Laden's son by another wife, Saad, for autism. She gave birth to Hamza, their only child together, as al-Qaida itself took its first, tentative steps toward the **Sept. 11 attacks**.

"This boy has been living, breathing and experiencing the al-Qaida life since age zero," said Elisabeth Kendall, a senior research fellow at Pembroke College at Oxford University who studies Hamza bin Laden.

Hamza, whose name means "lion" or "strength" in Arabic, was a toddler when the bin Ladens' life in exile began. They moved to Sudan after bin Laden's criticism of the kingdom for hosting American forces during the 1991 Gulf War alienated the Al Saud royal family.

Under growing international pressure after bin Laden declared holy war on the U.S., Sudan pushed him out and the family moved again to Afghanistan in 1996. Hamza bin Laden was 7.

Al-Qaida's attacks against the U.S. began in earnest in 1998 with the dual bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people. Its 2000 suicide attack against the USS Cole off Yemen killed at least 17 sailors.

Hamza bin Laden appeared in photographs alongside his father or in propaganda videos during this time, hanging from monkey bars in military-style training or reciting a poem in classical Arabic, garbed in a camouflage vest.

Then came Sept. 11, 2001. The coordinated al-Qaida hijacking sent two U.S. commercial airliners slamming into the World Trade Center in New York, one striking the Pentagon and another crashing in rural Pennsylvania, all together killing nearly 3,000 people.

So at age 12, Hamza bin Laden appeared in the video above the wreckage of a helicopter, likely a remnant of the Soviet occupation, not a U.S. warplane as al-Qaida claimed at the time.

He recited a poem praising his father's ally, Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, as the "lion of Kabul," ran in a field with other boys and held a pistol above his head as if fearless of American airstrikes. It marked the last moments before the U.S.-led invasion would topple the Taliban and send Osama bin Laden fleeing into the mountains of Tora Bora and, from there, Pakistan.

Hamza later remembered receiving prayer beads from his father with his brother Khalid before leaving him.

"It was as if we pulled out our livers and left them there," he wrote.

And then, like his father, Hamza bin Laden disappeared.

The Iran years

Hamza bin Laden and his mother followed other al-Qaida members into Pakistan amid the U.S.-led coalition bombing campaign on Afghanistan. From there, they crossed into Iran, where other al-Qaida leaders hid them in a series of safe houses, according to experts and analysis of documents seized after the U.S. Navy SEAL team raid that killed the elder bin Laden in the Pakistani town of Abbottabad.

The connection between al-Qaida and Iran has been a murky one, firmly disputed by Tehran. Iran, the Mideast's predominant Shiite power, on its face seems a strange home for the Sunni Arab jihadists. Sunni extremists views Shiites as heretics and target them for violence.

But al-Qaida under Osama bin Laden made inroads with Iran during his days in Sudan, according to the U.S. government's 9/11 Commission. The commission said al-Qaida terrorists later received training in Lebanon from the Shiite terrorist group Hezbollah, which Iran backs to this day.

Before the Sept. 11 attacks, Iran allowed al-Qaida jihadists to pass through its borders without receiving stamps in their passports or with visas obtained at its consulate in Karachi, Pakistan, according to a 19-page, unsigned report found among Osama bin

Laden's personal effects in the Abbottabad raid. That helped the organization's Saudi members avoid suspicion. They also had contact with Iranian intelligence agents, according to the report.

Iran offered al-Qaida fighters "money and arms and everything they need, and offered them training in Hezbollah camps in Lebanon, in return for striking American interests in Saudi Arabia," the report said.

This matches up with the 9/11 Commission's report, which found that eight of the Sept. 11 hijackers passed through Iran before arriving in the United States. However, the commission "found no evidence that Iran or Hezbollah was aware of the planning for what later became the 9/11 attack."

It's unclear why Iran allowed the al-Qaida members, including bin Laden's children and wives, to enter the country immediately after the 9/11 attacks. Iran's president at the time, Mohamed Khatami, and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei condemned the attack. However, by January 2002, U.S. President George W. Bush had declared Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil" alongside Iraq and North Korea.

By April 2003, just weeks into the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq that toppled Saddam Hussein, Iranian intelligence officials had had enough of al-Qaida being beyond their control. It rounded up all the al-Qaida members it could find and detained them, apparently at a series of military bases or other closed-off compounds, according to contemporaneous accounts by several al-Qaida jihadists.

Captivity

In Iran, Hamza's mother Khairiah Saber urged the al-Qaida lieutenants there to take her son – now a teenager – under their wing. Hamza wrote to his father recounting the Islamic theology books he studied in detention, while expressing frustration that he was not among the jihadis in battle.

"The mujahedeen have impressed greatly in the field of long victories, and I am still standing in my place, prohibited by the steel shackles," Hamza wrote in one of his letters found at Abbottabad. "I dread spending the rest of my young adulthood behind iron bars."

But those shackles ended up keeping him and the other al-Qaida fighters safe as the U.S. under Bush and later President Barack Obama targeted terrorists across the Mideast in a campaign of drone strikes. Hamza's half-brother Saad escaped Iranian custody and made it to Pakistan, only to be immediately killed by an American strike in 2009.

"That probably saved [Hamza] that he was in Iran during that period where everyone else was being knocked off, detained," said Tricia Bacon, an assistant professor at American University who focuses on al-Qaida and once worked in counterterrorism at the State Department. "It probably was one of the better places to be able to re-emerge at a later time."

Hamza during this time even married into al-Qaida, picking a daughter of Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, an Egyptian who the U.S. says helped plan the November 1998 embassy attacks. The couple had two children, Osama and Khairiah, named after his parents.

"I ask God to place their image in your eye," Hamza wrote his father. "He created them to serve you."

By this time, rumors of al-Qaida members being in Iran had reached a fever pitch. A teenage daughter of Osama bin Laden, Eman, somehow escaped imprisonment in late 2009 and made her way to the Saudi Embassy in Tehran. Iran's then-Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said at the time: "We don't know how this person went to the embassy or how she entered the country."

Khalid bin Laden, another son of the wanted terrorist, later would write a letter that was posted online and addressed to Iran's supreme leader saying his siblings were "beaten and repressed."

After years of imprisonment, an opportunity emerged for the al-Qaida members held in Iran. Gunmen in late 2008 kidnapped an Iranian diplomat in northwestern Pakistan. He would be freed in March 2010 as Hamza and others also left custody.

Osama bin Laden thought of sending Hamza to Qatar for religious scholarship, but his son instead went to Pakistan's Waziristan province, where he asked for weapons training, according to a letter to the elder bin Laden. His mother left for Abbottabad immediately, where her husband was in hiding, with Hamza hoping to come as well.

But on May 2, 2011, the Navy SEAL team raided Abbottabad, killing Osama bin Laden and Khalid, as well as others. Saber and other wives living in the house were imprisoned. Hamza again disappeared.

Reemergence

In August 2015, a video emerged on jihadi websites of Ayman al-Zawahri, the current leader of al-Qaida, introducing "a lion from the den of al-Qaida" – Hamza bin Laden. The younger bin Laden was not shown in the video, speaking only in an audio recording. With a voice deepened from the tinny recitals he offered as a child, he praised al-Qaida's franchises and other terrorists.

"What America and its allies fear the most is that we take the battlefield from Kabul, Baghdad, and Gaza to Washington, London, Paris, and Tel Aviv, and to take it to all the American, Jewish, and Western interests in the world," he said.

Since then, he has been featured in around a dozen al-Qaida messages, delivering speeches on everything from the war in Syria to U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to

Saudi Arabia on his first foreign trip as U.S. president. His style resembles his father's, with references to religious studies and snippets of poetry, a contrast to the gory beheading videos of the Islamic State group, which had risen up from al-Qaida in Iraq to seize territory across Iraq and Syria.

"He's not blood and guts," said Kendall, the senior research fellow at Pembroke College at Oxford University. "His speeches are more literary and educated."

While al-Zawahri still controls al-Qaida, the multiple messages have raised speculation that the terror group may be trying to plan for the future by putting forward a fresh face – albeit one they have so far only showed in old photographs of Hamza bin Laden as a child.

Meanwhile, the Islamic State group has seen its territory slip away as it was pounded by a U.S.-led coalition, Russian airstrikes and Iranian-backed forces.

That has left al-Qaida as the prominent jihadi group standing.

"I think as ISIS' strength continues to deteriorate, the international community has perhaps realized that there are other terrorist groups – including the ones that never went away, such as al-Qaida," said Sajjan Gohel, the international security director of the United Kingdom-based Asia-Pacific Foundation.

"In fact, al-Qaida has been quietly growing, regaining strength, letting ISIS take all the hits while they quietly reconstitute themselves," he added.

The State Department named Hamza bin Laden as a "global terrorist" in 2017, then followed up in February with the bounty on his head as the U.N. blacklisted him.

The designations show officials consider him a threat.

"There is probably other intelligence that indicates something's happening and that's what put this thing on the front burner," said Soufan, the former FBI agent.

But what's happening within al-Qaida remains a mystery. Hamza bin Laden hasn't been heard from since a message in March 2018, in which he threatened the rulers of Saudi Arabia. Why remains in question. Rumors have circulated that he himself was targeted in an attack. The CIA also published a video of him in November 2017 at his wedding in Iranian detention, showing the first publicly known photographs of him since childhood.

An image from that video now graces his U.S. wanted poster.

"Will he be successful? We don't know. Will he live long enough to do what his father was able to do? We have no idea. We might drone him tomorrow," Soufan said. "But this is the plan. This is what they wanted to do. This is what he is destined, I believe, to do from the beginning."

Newsletter Sunday March 17, 2019

Posted:

Iranians with forged Israeli passports held in Argentina for terrorist planning

Opinions

Brig. Gen. (res.) Zvika Fogel | Losers always find excuses

In the contemporary Middle East, there is no room for concessions or compromise. We either take responsibility for our future or someone else will do it for us.

Prof. Eyal Zisser | On the Golan, Iran talks, Israel walks

Assad's lack of legitimacy – due to his atrocities and his willingness to bow to Iran and Hezbollah – has led the U.S. to shift its policy on Israeli status on the Golan Heights.

Jonathan S. Tobin | Why J Street is losing to the far Left

The left-wing group's effort to compete with Birthright is an acknowledgment of Israel's centrality that its radical rivals – real enemies who are fighting for BDS and Israel's destruction – abhor.

Newsletter Sunday March 17, 2019

Iranians with forged Israeli passports arrested in Argentina

Argentine security forces examining possibility Iranian agents either **planned** to carry out **terrorist attack or act as lookouts** for such an attack • Incident comes as Argentina marks 25 years to deadly Iranian attack on Israeli Embassy there.

Neta Bar and Shlomi Diaz // published on **17/03/2019**

One of the forged Israeli passports used by the Iranian agents | Photo: Argentine Federal Police

Two Iranian nationals were arrested at a hotel in Buenos Aires, Tuesday, after they were found to have traveled on stolen Israeli passports. A gag order has been imposed on the incident, which government authorities are referring to as a "national security event."

International police organization Interpol confirmed that the Iranians had been found with stolen Israeli passports, which had been altered to suit the Iranian agents. According to sources with knowledge of the investigation, local security forces have not ruled out the possibility the Iranians had either planned to carry out a terrorist attack or were used as lookouts for such an attack.

Argentine media identified the Iranians, who posed as Netanel and Rivka Toledano, as Sajjad Samiel Naserani, 27, who claims to be a photographer and Mashoreh Sabzali, 30, an architect and engineer. The two arrived in the country from Spain.

Reuters

The scene of the deadly 1994 Iranian attack on Israel's embassy in Argentina
Sources in Argentina's Defense Ministry said this was a very sensitive case, in particular because the country was set to mark 25 years to the deadly terror attack perpetrated by Iranian agents on the Israeli Embassy there in 1992 that killed 29 people and wounded 242.

The two were arrested in a police raid on the hotel where the agents were staying after authorities in the country found them to be forged. While the passports were initially believed to have been stolen, due to their numbers corresponding to passports that were reported as lost or stolen, the Hebrew spelling mistakes on the passports led to the conclusion they had been falsified.

Newsletter Sunday March 17, 2019

1 dead, 2 seriously wounded in terrorist attack near Ariel

IDF, Shin Bet sweeping area near Ariel to find terrorist who stabbed a soldier, stole his gun, and used the weapon to open fire at two locations • One man in critical condition • President Reuven Rivlin: Israel will find anyone who attacks its citizens.

Lilach Shoval, Itsik Saban, Efrat Forsher, Israel Hayom Staff and Associated Press // published on 17/03/2019

The scene of the terrorist shooting/stabbing on Highway 5 near Ariel Junction on Sunday | Photo: Magen David Adom

One Israeli was killed and a two were seriously wounded Sunday morning in a combined shooting-stabbing terrorist attack on Highway 5 near Ariel Junction.

According to Israel Radio, a Palestinian man exited one of the stores at Ariel Junction, stabbed an IDF soldier, and stole his gun. He used the soldier's gun to shoot him. The attacker then opened fire at passing cars, hitting and wounding one occupant.

One driver abandoned his vehicle. The terrorist jumped into the car and drove in the direction of Gitai-Avissar Junction, some 10 kilometers (6 miles) away, where he opened fire at a bus stop, wounding a third Israeli.

Magen David Adom received the first report of the attack at 9:45. Paramedics scrambled to the scene and began treating the three wounded. The two wounded were evacuated to Rabin Medical Center in Petach Tikva. One was listed in critical condition with a head wound and the second with a serious wound to his abdomen.

Yossi Zeliger

Staff at Rabin Medical Center unload one of the wounded

MDA paramedic Daniel Weissberg said, "When we got to Ariel Junction, we were led to a 46-year-old man who had been shot in the upper body. He was unconscious. We administered first aid, which included putting him under and attaching him to a respirator, and evacuated him to the hospital in serious but stable condition."

Paramedic Aviel Mamila said that from Ariel Junction, they were directed to Gitai-Avissar, where he saw "a young guy in his 20s, half-conscious, with a stomach wound. We administered first aid and evacuated him to the hospital, [also] in serious but stable condition."

After the second shooting, the terrorists reportedly fled toward a nearby Palestinian village. IDF Spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus said forces gathered at the entrance to the village to assist in the manhunt. Conricus said it was unclear whether the assailant acted alone or with the assistance of others, and whether he belonged to any Palestinian terrorist group.

Reuters

A forensic investigator inspects a damaged car at the scene of Sunday's terrorist attack. IDF and Shin Bet security agency forces were conducting a sweep of the entire area and security forces were working to obtain security camera footage from homes and businesses near the scene of the attack.

Immediately after the attack, the security department of the Samaria Regional Council held an emergency meeting with representatives of the defense establishment and decided to close the main gates to the Barkan settlement and the Barkan Industrial Park until the terrorists were captured.

President Reuven Rivlin said following the attacks: "I want to give strength to the families who are now dealing with the difficult news of the terrible terrorist attack, and the security forces, who are now in pursuit of the terrorists.

"Israel will find anyone who raises their hand against our citizens, and will chase down terrorism and those who perpetrate it," Rivlin said.