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## Opinions

No conundrum: Standing for Israel and diversity of opinion on campus  
by Dan Ehrenkrantz

It is wrenching to watch the divestment debate pit students against one another in a political fight rather than enabling them to engage with one another over their differences. And it in no way solves the problems of the Middle East.

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## OPINIONS

Israel's tourism triumph (Part 1)  
by Edwin Black

In 2016, 2.9 million total worldwide visitors visited Israel. By the close of 2018, that number had boomed to 4.1 million – and the totals keep climbing. Within the coming decade, Israel expects to employ 98,000 people in its tourism sector.

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## OPINIONS

Ben Rhodes is back for more Israel-bashing  
by Stephen M. Flatow

Rhodes has harsh opinions about Israel. He seems proud that he helped trick the public into accepting the Iran nuclear deal. And he's proud of his role in Obama's policies toward Israel – in fact, he regrets that they weren't harsher.

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### US pulls forces from Libya as fighting approaches capital

American troops have been helping local Libyan forces battle Islamic State and al-Qaida • Head of Libyan government accuses Libyan National Army chief Khalifa Hifter of "betrayal" following surprise offensive • U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urges factions to resume negotiations.

by Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff Published on 2019-04-08 08:00 Last modified: 2019-04-08 13:46

US pulls forces from Libya as fighting approaches capital

A U.S. amphibious hovercraft departs with evacuees from Janzur, west of Tripoli, Libya, on Sunday | Photo: AP

The United States has temporarily withdrawn some of its forces from Libya due to "security conditions on the ground," a top military official said Sunday as a Libyan commander's forces advanced toward the capital of Tripoli and clashed with rival militias.

A small contingent of American troops has been in Libya in recent years, helping local forces combat Islamic State and al-Qaida militants, as well as protecting diplomatic facilities.

"The security realities on the ground in Libya are growing increasingly complex and unpredictable," said Marine Corps Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, the head of U.S. Africa Command.

"Even with an adjustment of the force, we will continue to remain agile in support of existing U.S. strategy."

He did not provide details on the number of U.S. troops that have been withdrawn or how many remain in the country.

Footage circulating online showed two apparent U.S. Navy transport craft maneuvering off a beach in Janzur, east of Tripoli, sending up plumes of spray as American forces were ferried from the shore.

India also evacuated a small contingent of peacekeepers. The Indian foreign minister, Sushma Swaraj, said the country's 15 Central Reserve Police Force peacekeepers were evacuated Saturday from Tripoli because the "situation in Libya has suddenly worsened" and fighting has moved into the capital city.

The self-styled **Libyan National Army, led by Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter**, launched a surprise offensive against the capital last week, a move that could potentially drag the country back into civil war. Libya has been gripped by unrest since the 2011 uprising that overthrew and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi. In recent years, the country has been governed by rival authorities in the east and in Tripoli, in the west, each backed by various armed groups.

Fayez Sarraj, head of government in Tripoli, **accused Hifter of “betraying”** him.

“We have extended our hands towards peace, but after the aggression that has taken place on the part of forces belonging to Hifter and his declaration of war against our cities and our capital ... he will find nothing but strength and firmness,” al-Sarraj said Saturday in televised comments.

**Sarraj and Hifter** held talks in Abu Dhabi in late February, their first confirmed meeting since November 2018, when they agreed that national elections were necessary, according to the U.N.

**Hifter is seeking to capture** the capital and seize military control of the whole country before U.N.-sponsored talks due to start next week that were designed to set a time frame for possible elections in the **oil-rich country**.

The U.N. envoy for Libya, Ghassan Salame, said the U.N. is determined to hold the planned conference.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike **Pompeo** urged Libyan factions to return to negotiations, saying that **“there is no military solution to the Libya conflict.”**

“We have made clear that we oppose the military offensive by Khalifa Haftar’s forces and urge the immediate halt to these military operations against the Libyan capital,” Pompeo said in a statement.

Fighting was underway Sunday at the international airport, some 24 kilometers (15 miles) from central Tripoli, after Hifter claimed to have seized the area. The airport was destroyed in a previous bout of militia fighting in 2014. Hifter said his forces had launched airstrikes targeting rival militias on the outskirts of Tripoli.

The **rival militias, which are affiliated with a U.N.**-backed government in Tripoli, said they had also carried out airstrikes, slowing Hifter’s advance.

Armed groups behind the U.N.-backed government of national accord, or GNA, have announced an effort to defend Tripoli, vowing to recapture all areas seized by Hifter’s forces.

Col. Mohamed Gnounou, a spokesman for GNA forces, said in televised comments Sunday that the counteroffensive, dubbed “Volcano of Anger,” was aimed at “purging all Libyan cities of aggressor and illegitimate forces.”

The two sides reported that at least 35 people, including civilians, had been killed since Thursday.

The Health Ministry of the Tripoli-based government said in a statement that at least 21 people, including a physician, were killed and at least 27 wounded. Ahmed al-Mesmari, a spokesman for Hifter’s forces, said Saturday that 14 troops had been killed since the offensive began.

The fighting has displaced hundreds of people, the U.N. migration agency said. The U.N. mission to Libya called for a two-hour cease-fire on Sunday in parts of Tripoli to evacuate civilians and the wounded.

The LNA is supported by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, France and Russia. It answers to the authorities based in eastern Libya, who are at odds with the U.N.-backed government.

### US designates Iran’s Revolutionary Guards a terrorist group

Designation to take effect in a week, Pompeo says. Measure, first of its kind, could deal major blow to Iran's economy. Iran reportedly mulling targeting U.S. forces.  
by Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff Published on 2019-04-08 15:48 Last modified: 2019-04-08 18:39

### US designates Iran’s Revolutionary Guards a terrorist group

Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops march in a military parade marking the 36th anniversary of Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran, in front of the shrine of late revolutionary founder Ayatollah Khomeini, just outside Tehran, Iran in 2016 | Photo: AP

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday designated Iran’s elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a foreign terrorist organization, an unprecedented step that raises tension in the Middle East.

Iran has warned it will take reciprocal action against Washington for its move against the Guards, the country’s most powerful security organization and a major component of its economy.

It is the first time the United States has formally labeled another country's military a terrorist group.

"The IRGC is the Iranian government's primary means of directing and implementing its global terrorist campaign," Trump said in a statement.

The designation "makes crystal clear the risks of conducting business with, or providing support to, the IRGC," Trump said. "If you are doing business with the IRGC, you will be bankrolling terrorism."

Critics have warned that the move could open U.S. military and intelligence officials to similar actions by unfriendly governments. The United States has already blacklisted dozens of entities and people for affiliations with the IRGC, but not the organization as a whole.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a strident critic of Iran, has pushed for the change in U.S. policy as part of the Trump administration's tough posture toward Tehran. Pompeo told a news conference the designation will take effect in one week.

The announcement comes shortly before the first anniversary of Trump's decision to pull out of a 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran and to reimpose sanctions that had crippled Iran's economy.

In reaction to the designation, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif accused Israel's supporters of being behind the administration's decision. According to other media reports, he also advised the Iranian regime of retaliating by designating U.S. forces in the region as terrorists.

Tags: Iran Revolutionary Guards

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