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# FLAME HOTLINE

Facts & Logic About the Middle East

August 29, 2017

## It's Time to Put Iran's Feet to the Fire—the U.S. Must Act Now Before It's Too Late

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Have you been following the news about Iran? The threat being mounted by the Islamic Republic gains murderous mass and momentum with every passing day.

As you recall, two weeks ago we reviewed the ominous dangers Iran poses to the United States, one of which—a huge one—poses an existential threat to Israel.

Because they can't be overemphasized, let me quickly recap for you the reasons Iran's behavior demand forceful, focused attention by the U.S. and the rest of the world:

- Iran's military regularly harasses U.S. ships and aircraft in the Persian Gulf;
- Iran is increasing support of the Taliban, even as the U.S. is ramping up efforts against the Afghan terror group;
- Iran has for decades been sowing terror in Latin America—by placing radical imams and supporting militant locals in Brazil, Chile, Columbia, El Salvador, Peru and Argentina;
- Iran helped foment violent Arab demonstrations just a few months ago on Jerusalem's Temple Mount;
- Shiite Iran is actively supporting Houthi rebels in Yemen, creating instability on the Arabian Peninsula and troubling our (nominal) ally, the Sunni state of Saudi Arabia.
- Iran continues to develop nuclear arms capability, announcing this week that it could build an atomic bomb in only five days;

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*You deserve a factual look at...*

### U.S. Funds Palestinian Terrorism

**Yens of millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars are spent annually to pay salaries to Palestinian terrorists who murder innocent civilians in Israel.**

*In prep up the virtually bankrupt Palestinian Authority (PA), the U.S. sends Palestinians more than \$400 million a year in aid. The PA, however, spends some \$140 million annually to reward jihadists and their families for murderous acts that kill innocent Americans and Israelis.*

**What are the facts?**

*In June 2016, 13-year-old Hallel Telleh died in a terrorist attack. Her father, a 28-year-old Israeli, was killed in the attack. Her mother, a 28-year-old Israeli, was killed in the attack. Her father, a 28-year-old Israeli, was killed in the attack. Her mother, a 28-year-old Israeli, was killed in the attack.*

**You can't be a partner in peace when you are paying people to commit terrorist acts.**

*Senator Lindsey Graham*

**Time to End U.S. Funding of Terror.** At last, members of Congress are introducing legislation to prevent U.S. aid from supporting the culture of jihadist terror. Senators Dan Coats, Ben Rayburn and Lindsey Graham, for example, have introduced legislation to end financial aid to the Palestinian Authority until it stops financing terrorism. Senator Graham has noted that "You can't be a partner in peace when you are paying people to commit terrorist acts."

**U.S. Funds to the Palestinian Authority.** According to a Congressional Research Service report, the U.S. since the mid-2010s has contributed more than \$3 billion in security assistance and bilateral economic aid to the PA, and American taxpayers' current annual commitment is now some \$400 million. In fact, Palestinians are the world's largest per-capita recipients of international aid.

**What's a 2016 State Department report** praised the Palestinian Authority for making "terrorism financing a criminal offense." The PA still has time on its hands.

**In order to achieve a serious and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, committed terrorists or who threaten to while committing terrorism must not be compensated by the Palestinian government for these crimes. It is a tragedy that American taxpayer dollars subsidize the hatred, prejudice, and violence that terrorism causes.**

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and

- Iran is methodically, seemingly inexorably, building a fiercely armed land bridge across the Middle East—through Iraq and now Syria into Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea—creating massive influence and military capability, especially on Israel's northern border.

Just to provide additional perspective, last week U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley charged the head of UNIFIL—the U.N. "peacekeeping" force in southern Lebanon—with allowing Iran's terrorist proxy army, Hizbollah, to build up massive military installations and weaponry on Israel's borders with Lebanon and Syria.

Despite incontrovertible evidence gathered by Israel to support Haley's contention, UNIFIL's director categorically denied any build-up whatsoever—and Western nations, such as France, have refused to authorize even more aggressive *investigation* of the charges.

No wonder Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu traveled to Sochi, Russia last week to meet with Vladimir Putin and warn the Russian president that Iran's efforts to establish a permanent military presence in Syria would not be permitted. Reportedly, Putin gave Israel *no* assurances that he would prevent Iran's expansion.

Even more disconcerting—and far tougher to understand—the Trump administration is also refusing to take the lead in stopping Iran's steady, hegemonic land grab in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Which leaves Israel on its own in opposing the world's most dangerous actor.

This week's FLAME *Hotline* featured article, below, by Jonathan Schanzer, gives you a quick, comprehensive analysis of the situation in Syria and surrounding territory, with a playbook revealing the troubling role of the key players, including Russia, Turkey, Iraq and Hizbollah.

While Schanzer's explanation is detailed (and a bit wonkish), I think it will help you appreciate both the complexity and urgency of the situation. Above all, it behooves the Trump administration to realize that it is not ISIS that is the arch enemy of the U.S. but Iran. The U.S. must respond accordingly—and quickly.

Finally, on an equally pressing issue, I hope you'll also quickly

## PLEASE HELP US!!

FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial hasbarah messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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## FLAME'S WEEKLY HOTLINE E- NEWSLETTER



FLAME's Hotline e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the most important pro-Israel advocacy issues and features our choice of the week's most informative and thought-provoking article on Israel and the Middle East. If you only subscribe to one pro-Israel news service, make it the FLAME Hotline.

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review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's long-running hasbarah campaign to promote a Congressional bill that withdraws U.S. funding to the Palestinians as long as they use \$300 million a year of foreign aid to pay salaries as an incentive to terrorists.

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson  
President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Did you know: By subsidizing the corrupt Palestinian Authority (P.A.) with aid of some \$400 million taxpayer dollars a year, the U.S. is also funding the P.A.'s program of paying salaries to Palestinian terrorists who have killed innocent Americans and Israelis? In order to make Americans—especially college and university students—aware of this Palestinian practice of rewarding jihadi assailants and murderers with U.S. funds, FLAME has recently been publishing a new position paper: "[U.S. Funds Palestinian Terrorism](#)" This paid editorial has appeared in magazines and newspapers, including college newspapers, with a combined readership of some 10 million people. In addition, it is being sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now more than ever we need your support to ensure that the American people and the U.S. Congress end our support of blatantly anti-Semitic, global jihadist organizations.

As of today, more than 15,000 Israel supporters receive the FLAME *Hotline* at no charge every week. If you're not yet a subscriber, won't you join us in receiving these timely updates, so you can more effectively tell the truth about Israel? Just go to [free subscription](#).

**And the Winner in Syria Is . . . Iran**  
**The region is more combustible given Israel's**

## **concerns about steps taken by its US and Russian allies.**

By Jonathan Spyer, *Jerusalem Post*, August 26, 2017

### **A flurry of diplomatic activity is taking place in the Syrian and Iraqi arenas.**

While the moves are occurring on separate and superficially unrelated fronts, taken together they produce an emergent picture of two camps, one of which works as a united force on essential interests, but the other does not.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week traveled to Sochi to discuss the issue of Syria with Russian President Vladimir Putin over. Jerusalem is concerned with Iranian advances in the country, feeling that the de-escalation agreement for southwest Syria reached by Washington and Moscow is inadequate. This is simply because Tehran and its proxy militia allies are trying to establish themselves along the border with the Israeli-controlled part of the Golan Heights.

It is noteworthy that this visit followed an apparent failure by a senior Israeli security delegation to Washington DC to ensure a US commitment in this regard. As the officials were talking, the fighting fronts were on the move.

**Sunday saw the opening of an offensive to take the town of Tal Afar**, 60 kilometers west of Mosul, from the now crumbling Islamic State. Among the forces taking part in the offensive are the Hashd al-Sha'abi/Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

The PMU is the alliance of Shia militias mobilized to fight ISIS in the summer of 2014. Most prominent among them are Iranian-supported groups such as the Badr Organization, Ktaeb Hezbollah and the Asaib Ahl al-Haq.

An additional notable process now under way is the attempt to induce the Iraqi Kurds to abandon their proposed independence referendum, scheduled to take place on September 25. Iran is fiercely opposed to any Kurdish move toward independence.

Tehran is in the process of moving forward to a clearly dominant position in Iraqi politics, through its sponsorship of the Shia militias and the ruling Dawa Party. The last thing Tehran wants would be for a major part of the country to split away.

However, it has become clear that the European and US allies of the Kurds are also hostile to any Kurdish bid for independence.

**Both German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson** have made plain their respective countries' opposition to the referendum and any hopes of Kurdish exit from Iraq.

Last week saw evidence of the growing closeness between Iran and Turkey. Iranian Chief of Staff Gen. Muhammad Hossein Bagheri met with Turkish President Recep Tayepp Erdogan, following which Erdogan announced that the two countries have agreed on joint military action against the Kurdish PKK and its Iranian sister organization, PJAK. Bagheri's visit to Ankara was the first by an Iranian chief of staff since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

An additional new development came to light in the course of last week; namely the new role of Egypt as a player in the Syrian arena. Egypt has in recent weeks played a role as a mediator of de-escalation agreements in the eastern Ghouta area and in Homs, with the permission and approval of both the Russians and the Saudis.

Finally, the recent period saw the surprising visit of Iraqi Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr to Riyadh, where he met with Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman.

Sadr, a sectarian Shia figure who retains ties to Iran, has nevertheless sought to position himself as an Iraqi patriot in recent months.

So what does all this diplomatic and military activity mean? In looking to locate the pattern of events, one becomes immediately aware that the activities of only one player add up to a unified whole. That player is Iran.

**In backing the Shia militias as political and military forces,** opposing Kurdish aspirations to independence, seeking by all possible means to establish forces along the border with Israel, and seeking to draw Turkey away from the West and toward itself, Tehran is pursuing a coherent, comprehensive policy and strategy.

This strategy ignores any distinction among Iraq, Syria and Lebanon; treating all three as a single arena of conflict. Allies and assets are all utilized to build the project of maximizing Iranian geographic reach and political and military potency within this space.

Russia should not be considered a strategic ally in this. The

Russians have more modest goals in Syria and little interest in Iraq. Moscow favors the increased Egyptian role in Syria, which Tehran surely opposes. Russia is also not indifferent to Israeli and Saudi concerns and interests, hence the Netanyahu visit to Sochi.

The US also does not seem to wish to be a primary player in this arena. Washington does not appear to be developing a real strategy for containing the Iranians in eastern Syria, due to the internal strains and turmoil in the US that may indeed be a core factor preventing any real possibility of a US focus on this contest.

This leaves the local players. The components of the Iran-led alliance in this space are Iran itself, the Assad regime, Hezbollah, the Iraqi Shia militias and important elements within the Iraqi government.

Turkey appears to be moving in the direction of this bloc, though its size and Sunni nature mean it will never fully be a part of it.

**Perhaps most notable of all in this emergent strategic picture, in which a clear shape** is discernible as the waters settle, is the absence of a really powerful Sunni Islamist bloc. The once ascendant group of Muslim Brotherhood-type states and movements is no more—with Qatar besieged, Turkey moving closer to Iran, and Hamas also attempting to rebuild its relations with Tehran.

The Salafi jihadis are also reduced to the level of a terrorist irritant—a sometimes lethal one, to be sure, but far from a contender for power.

Islamic State is on the verge of destruction, with its core al-Qaida leadership dominant only in Syria's Idlib province.

This is an anomalous situation, for political Islam continues to dominate Sunni Arab politics at street level. The resilience and return of relatively stable Sunni Arab autocracies in Cairo, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Amman, and the eclipse of the Sunni Arab rebellion in Syria have removed it, for now at least, from the real power game in the Middle East.

The result that faces the cohesive and coherent Iran-led bloc is a much more nebulous gathering, but one which if combined possesses more power, more population and more wealth than the Iranians.

It lacks, however, the binding organizational capacity provided by

the Revolutionary Guard Corps. It also does not possess the broad ideological commonality of the Tehran-led group.

**Observe the forces mentioned in this article: Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE,** the Kurdish Regional Government, Egypt, the Kurdish paramilitary forces in Turkey and Iran, and add Jordan and the remaining non-jihadi Syrian rebels to complete the picture. These are the core elements, each on its own relevant front, standing in the way of Iranian advancement in the Middle East.

There are differences, disputes, and in some cases sharp rivalries among them. Much will depend on the creation of lines of communication and cooperation in this camp. The contest between these two groups in the Iraq-Syria space is today the core strategic conflict in the Middle East.

The logo for FLAME, featuring the word "FLAME" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a flame icon integrated into its top bar.

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