



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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IDF Provides Humanitarian Aid to Civilians in Syria and Philippines

Israel, Jordan, Palestinians to Sign Red Sea-Dead Sea Deal

Representatives of Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians were expected to sign a “historic” agreement to link the Red Sea with the shrinking Dead Sea, said Israeli Energy and Regional Development Minister Silvan Shalom.

Under the agreement water will be drawn from the Gulf of Aqaba at the northern end of the Red Sea. Some will be desalinated and distributed to Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians, while the rest will be transferred in four pipes to the parched Dead Sea, which would otherwise dry out by 2050.

The project addresses two problems: the acute shortage of clean fresh water in the region, especially in Jordan, and the rapid contraction of the Dead Sea. A new desalination plant is to be built in Aqaba, Jordan, to convert salt water from the Red Sea into fresh water for use in southern Israel and southern Jordan — each would get eight billion to 13 billion gallons a year.

Shalom noted the economic aspects of supplying inexpensive desalinated water to neighboring states, the environmental angle of “saving the Dead Sea” and the “strategic-diplomatic” aspect of the deal being signed at a time when peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians are floundering. “This is a breakthrough after many years of efforts,” he said. “It is nothing less than a historic move.”

The agreement was signed at the Washington headquarters of the World Bank, a sponsor of the project. [UPI and NYTimes]

The Israel Defense Forces has been providing humanitarian aid to Syrians living near the border, Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon revealed recently during a tour of the frontier. According to Ya’alon, Israel has sent water and food, including baby food, across the border, and has been helping the Syrians prepare for winter.

“Given the fact that these villages are besieged and have no access to anywhere else, we are helping for humanitarian reasons,” the defense minister said. The food is being transferred to the Syrian villages via the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. Sometimes, however, IDF soldiers lay aid packages just across the border and the village residents collect them.



The assistance supplements the medical treatment that has been provided to wounded Syrians, both at IDF field hospitals set up along the border and in Israeli hospitals [photo, a Syrian war victim arrives at Ziv Medical

Center, Safed].

Separately, the IDF humanitarian delegation to the Philippines was set to return to Tel Aviv along with two Filipino children who will be transferred to the Schneider Hospital for further medical care. The delegation, composed of both medical professionals and Home Front Command search and rescue experts, focused on providing medical treatment to casualties of Typhoon Haiyan, and repairing damaged infrastructures such as schools and water facilities.

Over a span of nearly two weeks, 2,686 patients, out of which 848 were children, were treated in the field hospital in Bogo City by IDF doctors. Other than casualties and injuries suffered from the typhoon, medical treatment was provided to those who needed it, such as people suffering from chronic illnesses and other medical conditions.

Col. Dr. David Dagan, commander of the IDF field hospital said, “The experts we brought are on the forefront of their fields in Israel. The doctors, nurses, and medical staff [who came] here left their homes, families, and jobs, immediately upon hearing there was a need ... motivated by compassion and guided by the values of human dignity and friendship.”

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(Continued from page 1)

The IDF medical team performed 60 surgeries, including cancerous tumor removals and eye surgeries. Most of the procedures performed were emergency, life-saving surgeries that required urgent medical attention. In addition, the IDF Gynecological team was involved in approximately 36 births.



Some of the IDF medical and rescue equipment will remain in the Philippines, to be used by the German-Austrian delegation. The remaining equipment consists of eight tents, generators, various medicines, and an X-ray machine.

Home Front Command soldiers and officers worked on repairing schools damaged by the storm. Four different schools were repaired and reopened entirely, welcoming children on their first days of classes after the Typhoon struck. In addition, IDF psychologists provided mental counseling to local teachers to give them the tools to ease children back into routine life. [Haaretz and IDFblog]

Israel to Buy Additional Missile Boats to Protect Offshore Gas Fields

Israel's Defense Ministry is seeking \$853 million to purchase four German missile boats to protect the country's offshore gas fields, officials said. Yossi Cohen, Israel's national security adviser, visited Berlin recently to discuss the deal, the German newspaper Bild reported.

Haaretz said Israel is also discussing the purchase with gunboat manufacturers in South Korea and the United States. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon and army chief Lt.Gen. Benny Gantz had previously approved plans to purchase four large gunboats to assist the navy in protecting Israeli gas fields located within Israel's economic zone, an area 200 nautical miles off the coastline, the newspaper said.

While the navy has already started patrolling the gas fields with missile boats, it requires an additional four gunboats to enhance security, the Israeli daily said. The drilling sites themselves are protected by private security firms and aerial patrols.

The Leviathan gas field located in the Mediterranean Sea was discovered in November 2010 -- about 81 miles west of Haifa's coast. The Tamar gas field, also located in the Mediterranean Sea, about 50 miles west of Haifa, was discovered in 2009 and became operational in March this year. In November, another gas field near Tamar, called Tamar Southwest, was discovered.

[UPI]

Peres: Guatemala Partly Responsible for Birth of Israel

President Shimon Peres recently credited Guatemala with being partly responsible for giving birth to Israel. At the welcome reception that he hosted for Otto Perez Molina



[at left in photo], the first Guatemalan president to pay an official visit to Israel, both Peres and Molina invoked the name of Jorge Garcia Granados who, as Guatemala's ambassador to

the United Nations in 1947 had been named by UN Secretary General Trygve Lie as a member of the UN Special Committee of Palestine, more popularly known as UNSCOP. The committee was charged with investigating the conflict in Palestine and making recommendations to the UN General Assembly about how the country should be governed in the future.

Garcia Granados, who was an ardent advocate for civil liberties, was very well disposed toward the Jews after what the Jewish people had suffered in the Holocaust, and as such was strongly in favor of the partition of Palestine, particularly in view of the fact that the British had turned away Holocaust survivors who sought to come to the Promised Land and banished them to Cyprus. He also admired the agricultural achievements of the Jews in so many previously barren parts of the country. Of the 11 member countries of the UNSCOP team, the representative of Guatemala was the most persuasive, with the ultimate result that the UN General Assembly voted in favor of partition, paving the way for the creation of the State of Israel.

Peres told Molina that Israel would never forget the debt that it owed to Guatemala and would be happy to operate with Guatemala at every level. He said that Molina was known as a great soldier and statesman who is now trying to solve the problems still confronting his country. Peres, who visited Guatemala several years ago and was charmed by its beauty, expressed satisfaction that the civil war in Guatemala is now history and that the nation with its diverse cultures and ethnic populations has been reconciled and united.

Molina was grateful that Israel had shared its agricultural know how with 5,000 Guatemalan students who had been permitted to study in the country, and had brought back home the education they had acquired which enabled rural areas to overcome the problems of poverty. However, Molina noted there are other rural areas where poverty is still rife.

[JPost]