



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Israel Insists That Iran Still Seeks Nuclear Weapons

Schindler's List Maker Moves to Israel at 92

"I feel at home," said Mimi Reinhardt on landing at Ben Gurion airport outside Tel Aviv over 60 years after she helped save hundreds of Polish Jews



during the Holocaust. Reinhardt joins her son, who has lived in Israel since the mid-1970s.

The 92-year-old secretary of Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist who saved the lives of

hundreds of Jews during the Nazi Holocaust, arrived in Israel on Monday to take up citizenship. Reinhardt was in charge of drawing up the lists of Jewish workers from the ghetto of the Polish city of Krakow who were recruited to work at Schindler's factory, saving them from deportation to the death camps.

S&P Lifts Israel Credit Rating

Israel's public finances and economy are more resilient in the face of geopolitical risks after four years "of uninterrupted and above-expectation fiscal consolidation, external asset accumulation, and robust economic growth," said a Standard & Poor's credit analyst. S&P raised the country's long-term foreign currency sovereign credit rating to A from A- and its long-term local currency credit rating to AA- from A+. This year the Israeli shekel improved against the dollar by more than 8%.

Israel said recently that it remained convinced that Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons and that it had probably resumed the weapons program an American classified report said was stopped in the fall of 2003. Israel believes Iran will have the resources to create a nuclear weapon by 2010 despite the U.S. intelligence report that it was not building an atomic bomb, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said recently.

The defense minister, Ehud Barak, rejected the American assessment of "moderate confidence" that Tehran had not restarted its nuclear weapons program by mid-2007 and that the end to the program "represents a halt to Iran's entire nuclear weapons program." He suggested that Israel would not rest in its efforts to stop Iran's activities. "It is our responsibility to ensure that the right steps are taken against the Iranian regime," Barak told Israeli Army radio.

Israel contends that Iran has resumed its nuclear weapons program with the clear aim of building a nuclear bomb. Assessments may differ, Barak said, "but we cannot allow ourselves to rest just because of an intelligence report from the other side of the Earth, even if it is from our greatest friend."

Mark Regev, a spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said diplomacy remained the correct path for now to deter Iran from developing a nuclear bomb. But he was explicit about the Israeli conclusion that Iran's intention was military, not civilian. "We believe that the purpose of the Iranian nuclear program is to achieve nuclear weapons," he said. "There is no other logical explanation for the investment the Iranians have made in their nuclear program."

The American assessment said Iran probably halted the weapons program "primarily in response to international pressure," a judgment Israel embraced as a call for further diplomatic action. Israeli experts on Iran said that the American report would make any action against Iran less likely, whether diplomatic or military, and that it would probably kill or dilute American-led efforts to pass another sanctions resolution through the United Nations Security Council.

Efraim Kam, a former Israeli military intelligence official, said if American intelligence thinks there is no military nuclear program, "that makes it harder for Israel to go against it," since an Israeli attack would require operational coordination with Washington.

Efraim Halevy, a former director of Mossad, said no country, and especially not the United States, would rely on a foreign assessment without making its own. "No matter how close allies are, you don't as a rule rely solely on the information of others."

The Real Israel: Focus on ARMDI — American Friends of Magen David Adom

American Friends of Magen David Adom (AFMDA) is celebrating more than 65 years of supporting Magen David Adom (MDA), Israel's equivalent of the Red Cross.



MDA was chartered and recognized as an emergency lifesaving service as a re-

sult of murderous riots in 1929 when Jewish farm and urban settlements suffered from Arab attacks. It was founded in Tel Aviv in 1930 by seven Israeli doctors as an emergency medical service.

- MDA and its trained volunteer and professional medical responders provides the entire nation's pre-hospital emergency medical needs, including medical, disaster, ambulance, and blood services.
- AFMDA raised over \$32 million to build the MDA National Blood Services Center in Ramat Gan to ensure that Israel's health care providers have sufficient blood to save lives.
- MDA provides 100% of the blood requirements of the Israel Defense Forces and 95% of the blood needs of Israeli hospitals and the general population.
- In the past five years, AFMDA raised over \$90 million to purchase medical supplies, equipment, paramedic training, and ambulances for MDA in Israel.
- AFMDA provided 110 ambulances to MDA in 2004, of which 49 were Mobile Intensive Care Units.
- In 2003, AFMDA sent 99 ambulances to MDA, including 22 Mobile Intensive Care Units and 7 bloodmobiles.
- 656 MDA ambulances travel over 5.25 million miles a year, taking care of more than 300,000 patients annually.
- MDA has 100 Emergency Medical Stations in communities throughout Israel and 11 dispatch centers that provide emergency care and ambulance services.

American Friends of Magen David Adom is the sole and exclusive tax-exempt fundraising organization in the United States supporting the life saving efforts of MDA in Israel. More information about supporting the activities AFMDA may be had by visiting its website:

<http://www.afmda.org/>

Israel Gets 'Chinese' Admiral

The new commander of Israel's Navy is of Chinese descent, a first for the military top brass in the Jewish state. Admiral Eli Marom — nicknamed "Chiney" — took over as navy chief this month after his predecessor, David Ben-Bassat, quit amid criticism of his conduct during the Lebanon war.

Marom's mother was a member of the Chinese Jewish community, born to a local man and a Russian émigré woman. She married Marom's father after he fled his native Germany for China during World War II. In 1955, the couple moved to Israel, where Marom was born.



Marom's Asiatic appearance may have helped him advance in the Israel Navy. "The fact that Chiney looked different forced him constantly to show that he was better. He became one of the very best very quickly," one former comrade told Yediot Acharonot, which ran a profile of the new admiral. Marom, 52, trained as an engineer and ascended through the ranks, overseeing major naval operations such as the 2002 capture of an Iranian-supplied weapons ship en route to Gaza.

Israel to Clinch South American Pact

Mercosur, South America's four-nation trading bloc - comprised of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay and representing nearly 250 million people - is poised to clinch a historic pact with Israel.

Itzhak Levanon, Israel's ambassador to international organizations in Geneva, said "it is something very important because it will be the first trade agreement for Israel in South America." Israel already has trade agreements with the United States, European Union, Canada, and Mexico. Mercosur has struggled to reach a deal with the 27-nation European Union.

Trade flows between Israel and South America are relatively small. The package is expected to facilitate freer movement of some goods traded back and forth, but is not expected to usher in dramatic commercial expansion. The talks in Geneva were the eighth round between Israel and Mercosur. They built on previous discussions in Brazil, Israel, and Uruguay, said Levanon who represents Israel at the World Trade Organization.

We hope you enjoy reading *Israel Matters!* Please let us know if there are any issues involving Israel that you would like to see addressed in *Israel Matters!* We look forward to your comments. Send them by email to Ed and Randy Berns, Co-chairs of the TBS Israel Affairs Committee, at: redberns@sbcglobal.net