



# ISRAEL MATTERS!

Publication of the Israel Affairs Committee of Temple Beth Sholom

Issue Number 21  
January 2009

## Netanyahu Upbeat on Obama Plans for Iran

### Site Bombed by IAF had Nuclear Reactor Characteristics

A Syrian site bombed by Israel in September 2007 had the characteristics of a nuclear reactor, the UN nuclear watchdog agency said in a recent report. The International Atomic Energy Agency also said its probe into Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program is deadlocked.

The two reports are being shared with the 35 nations on the IAEA board. The Iran report also goes to the UN Security Council. Syria denied the allegations that the site, located deep in the Syrian Desert, was an atomic reactor. The regime claimed that the complex destroyed by IAF warplanes was an agricultural research center. Syria claimed that traces of uranium found in the site originated with the IAF's bombs.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei told reporters in Dubai, United Arab Emirates that the radioactive material's source was inconclusive. ElBaradei said greater cooperation from Syria and other nations was needed to determine whether the uranium traces at the site, bombed by Israeli jets was from a nuclear reactor.

US officials have said the facility was a nearly completed reactor that - when on line - could have produced plutonium, a pathway to nuclear arms. But the uranium used in manufacturing explosives and uranium enriched for nuclear purposes have a different radiation-footprint.

On Iran, the agency noted that Teheran continues expanding its uranium enrichment program in defiance of three sets of Security Council sanctions

Benjamin Netanyahu, who many think will be Israel's next Prime Minister said recently he saw the U.S. president-elect, Barack Obama as serious about denying Iran nuclear arms. Netanyahu, whose right-wing party leads in polls before the upcoming February 10th Israeli election, was responding to concerns raised by Israeli analysts that Obama did not explicitly say in recent televised remarks that he could resort to force against Tehran if it did not bow to U.S. demands over its nuclear program.



Netanyahu with Obama during a July meeting

"President-elect Obama spoke to me about his view that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons is unacceptable," Netanyahu told Reuters in a brief interview. "I say that what counts is the goal and the result that he envisions and the way that he achieves that goal is less important," said Netanyahu, a former prime minister. Netanyahu said he "... was impressed by his commitment to prevent Iran from crossing the nuclear threshold" and that he "... had no

doubt that that commitment is genuine and that he will follow through with it."

Israel's insistence that Iran must not be allowed to develop an atomic bomb has fueled speculation that Israel, widely assumed to have the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, could mount its own pre-emptive strikes.

Obama said in the television interview that he would be willing to directly offer Iran economic incentives to stop pursuing nuclear technologies that have bomb-making potential, with the threat of tougher sanctions if it did not comply. Contrasting his latest comments with the routine refusal of outgoing President George W. Bush to rule out a military option or talk to Tehran, some Israeli analysts saw Obama signaling that the next U.S. administration, already fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, would be reluctant to open up a third front.

Iran, which denies seeking nuclear weapons but whose stridently anti-Israel rhetoric has stoked regional war fears, was cool to the prospect of Obama's "carrot and stick" strategy.

Netanyahu, currently opposition leader, is seen in Israel as more hawkish on Iran than his main rival for the premiership, centrist Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. Three years ago, Netanyahu called for Israel to reprise, against Iran, its 1981 bombing of Iraq's main nuclear reactor. But more recently he has voiced a preference for pressing ahead with U.S.-led diplomatic and economic pressure on Tehran.

## Israeli Researchers Pioneer Laser Treatment for Sealing Wounds

Despite contemporary microsurgery techniques, suturing wounds and cuts remains problematic as treated wounds are open to infection, and the patient is often left with permanent and unsightly scars.

When carbon dioxide lasers were invented, many thought they would be the ideal way to seal wounds more effectively and minimize scarring. Attempts to use these lasers for bonding cuts in the operating room or in clinics failed, however, because surgeons were unable to control the heat emitted by the laser. The lasers either "undercooked" or "overcooked" the patient's delicate tissues, causing long-term thermal damage.

A team of Israeli researchers believe they have the solution. The scientists, from Tel Aviv University, have developed a technique that maintains the heat of the laser at exactly the right temperature for optimal wound healing, allowing surgeons to seal cuts both on patients' skin and inside their bodies with less scarring, and less exposure to infection.

The new technique, developed by Prof. Abraham Katzir and a team from the university's Applied Physics Group, is called laser-welding. When the laser begins to overheat and risks burning the tissue, the device reduces laser power, and if the temperature is too low to complete a closure, laser power is increased appropriately.

Katzir is the first researcher to apply the carbon dioxide laser, coupled to optical fibers, for wound closure under a tight temperature control. His innovation is in the use of unique optical fibers made from silver halide developed at the university. The fibers deliver the laser's energy to heat the bonded cut and are used for controlling the temperature. They also make it possible to bond tissues inside the body. "Sutures or stitches are not water tight, and blood or urine can pass through cuts, causing severe infection," he says. "Also, in many cases, a surgeon needs great skill to perform internal stitching, or in bonding tiny blood vessels, or in mending cuts on the skin so there will be no trace left on the body."

Successful preliminary experiments have showed that the new technique can be used to bond cuts on the cornea, bladder, intestines, blood vessels or trachea. It may also be used for bonding tissues inside the body on organs such as the kidney, and even in brain surgery. Perfect for healing soft tissues, the laser may prevent an enormous amount of trauma when used for closing internal wounds.

"We think plastic surgeons will especially love this invention. Bonding tissues that heal well without scarring is a true art that few people possess," says Katzir. He believes the method will be much easier to master than suturing, and will generate a watertight bond, preventing infections and accelerating healing. The researchers plan to apply to the FDA in the US for large scale trials, and with permission from Israel's Ministry of Health, they will soon begin testing the device on longer cuts, such as hernia operations. If these trials prove successful, the basic research could be developed into a commercial product within a few years.

## Stiller, Rock say Israel is Better than Hollywood

Chris Rock says Israel is better than Hollywood. Ben Stiller agrees. The two Hollywood stars were recently in Israel for the premiere of their latest movie, "Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa." The animated film features animal characters escaping from Madagascar to the African mainland in a zany adventure.

The premiere was in the coastal Israeli city of Netanya. Stiller said it was a good place to roll out a new movie. He said, "This is better than any premiere we have had so far." Rock expanded on that. He said, "It's much better than Hollywood. They don't like us in Hollywood, but here they love us."

While in Jerusalem Stiller also visited the Western Wall in the Old City and the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.



Left to right: Producer Jeffrey Katzenberg, Ben Stiller, actress Jada Pinkett Smith, and Chris Rock

## Governor Pawlenty Heads to Israel on Trade Mission

Minnesota governor, Tim Pawlenty, recently launched a trade mission to Israel, traveling more than 6,000 miles to promote Minnesota businesses. Pawlenty will lead a delegation that includes business leaders who see trade opportunities in Israel, Minnesota's 22nd largest export market in 2007.

The trip includes stops in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The Republican governor will also address a large economic conference.

Minnesota businesses shipped \$121 million worth of manufactured goods including computer products and machinery to Israel last year. Republican Arne Carlson was the last Minnesota governor to take a trade delegation there 15 years ago. Pawlenty has already led trade missions to Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Poland and India.