

Israeli officials suspect Raisi's death in helicopter crash, deny involvement

While Jerusalem refraining from official comment on helicopter crash involving Iran president, Israeli sources deny link to incident; senior officials believe Raisi's death will have no significant impact on Israel

Itamar Eichner | 13:39

Israel is closely monitoring reports from Iran Sunday about the helicopter crash involving, among others, President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. As in the West, there is speculation in Israel that Raisi, known as the "Butcher of Tehran," did not survive the crash.

Israeli officials are refraining from commenting on the incident. However, unofficial sources have clarified that the country had no connection or involvement in the helicopter crash, which reportedly occurred due to severe weather conditions near Jolfa, a city close to the Azerbaijani border, approximately 600 kilometers (375 miles) northwest of Iran's capital, Tehran.



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (Photo: Iran's Presidency/WANA (West Asia News Agency)/Handout via REUTERS)

Senior Israeli officials said that the possible deaths of Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian are not expected to impact Israel or its policy toward the Islamic Republic.

The only potential consequence depends on who will succeed Iran's president. One possibility mentioned is the return of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who served as Iran's sixth president from 2005 to 2013 and is considered a bitter enemy of Israel.

The senior officials added that aside from changes within Iran, there will be no impact on Israel because the decisions regarding Israel are made by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He is the one who made key decisions about the nuclear program and the campaign of terror against Israel. In this regard, Raisi's death will not change anything for better or worse.

However, the deaths of the Iranian officials could encourage the opposition in Iran, which might exploit the leadership transition to increase instability in the country.

Iranian crowds gather for mass public prayer after President Ibrahim Raisi's helicopter goes missing

News of the helicopter crash reached U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan during a series of meetings in Israel. President Biden reportedly cut his vacation short due to the reports emerging from Iran.

Israeli officials anticipated that some within Iran would try to spread conspiracy theories about purported Israel's involvement in the crash.

The Cyber Army of the Revolutionary Guards, a website affiliated with the powerful ideologically driven branch of the Iranian armed forces, wrote "the crash of the helicopter carrying government officials makes the possibility of assassination and sabotage strong, and the crash of the president's personal helicopter among the three helicopters makes this possibility almost certain. There was a meeting with the Zionist regime of Azerbaijan before the incident. Imam Reza, you are our hope." <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/hkynv6d7c#autoplay>

IDF says 2 soldiers killed, 4 seriously wounded during fighting in southern Gaza

800,000 civilians evacuate Rafah as Israel said to seek US okay for expanded op during visit by Sullivan; TV report: Troops find 50 tunnels used to smuggle in weapons from Egypt

By Emanuel Fabian and Tol Staff Today, 11:19 am



Staff Sgt. Noam Bittan (left) and Staff Sgt. Nachman Meir Haim Vaknin of the Givati Brigade's reconnaissance unit, who were killed during fighting in the southern Gaza Strip on May 18, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

The Israel Defense Forces on Sunday announced the deaths of two soldiers during fighting in the southern Gaza Strip a day earlier, as the military moved to further expand operations in the enclave and Palestinian terrorists there launched rockets at the south of Israel.

The slain troops were named as **Staff Sgt. Nachman Meir Haim Vaknin, 20, from Eilat** and **Staff Sgt. Noam Bittan, 20, from Yad Rambam**.

The pair served in the Givati Brigade's reconnaissance unit.

Vaknin and Bittan were killed and another two soldiers and an officer of the Givati reconnaissance unit were seriously wounded as a result of a blast in a booby-trapped tunnel shaft in the Rafah area.

Their deaths brought the toll of slain troops in the IDF's ground offensive against Hamas in Gaza and in operations on the border to 282.

In a separate incident, a reservist of the 5832nd Combat Engineering Battalion was seriously wounded in Rafah after his D9 armored bulldozer was hit by an RPG.



Troops of the 460th Armored Brigade operate on the outskirts of northern Gaza's Jabaliya, in a handout image published May 18, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

Their deaths came amid intense battles across Gaza. On Saturday morning, the military said the air force struck more than 70 targets throughout the enclave over the past day, as ground forces operated in Rafah, Jabaliya in the north, and the Netzarim Corridor.

According to the IDF, the targets included weapon depots, infrastructure, and buildings

belonging to terror groups, as well as operatives.

One of the airstrikes in Rafah hit a senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative, who the IDF said was head of logistics for the terror group in the city in southern Gaza. "As part of his role, he was responsible for preparing the enemy for the IDF maneuver in Rafah," the military said.

In eastern Rafah, the military said troops of the Givati Brigade spotted and killed an RPG-wielding operative in a building near them. Givati troops raided several sites in the area, locating weapons, the IDF added.

Also in eastern Rafah, the Egoz commando unit located a rocket launcher at a building used by terror groups, the IDF said.

The United Nations said on Saturday evening that some 800,000 people have evacuated Rafah since May 6, when the IDF initially ordered some 100,000 civilians to leave the area ahead of a "limited scope operation."

Once home to some 280,000 people, the population of Gaza's southernmost city is estimated to have swelled to more than 1.5 million throughout the ongoing war, as civilians from across the Gaza Strip fled south to escape the fighting between Israel and Hamas.

Israel has said that Rafah, where four of Hamas's remaining six battalions are deployed, remains a major stronghold for the terror group. It also believes that many of the remaining 124 hostages taken during the Hamas-led October 7 terror onslaught are being held in Rafah.

"Once again, nearly half of the population of Rafah or 800,000 people are on the road, having been forced to flee since the Israeli forces started the military operation in the area on 6 May," UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said on X.

“Since **the war in Gaza began, Palestinians have been forced to flee multiple times in search of safety they have never found,**” he continued, decrying the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave.

“When people move they are exposed, without safe passage or protection.

“Every time, they are forced to leave behind the few belongings they have: mattresses, tents, cooking utensils and basic supplies that they cannot carry or pay to transport. Every time, they have to start from scratch, all over again.,” he said.

Once again, nearly half of the population of Rafah or 800,000 people are on the road, having been forced to flee since the Israeli Forces started the military operation in the area on 6 May.

In response to evacuation orders demanding people to flee to so-called safe zones,...

— Philippe Lazzarini (@UNLazzarini) [May 18, 2024](#)

The designated safe zones to which civilians have been told to relocate “do not have safe water supplies or sanitation facilities,” Lazzarini charged, demanding “rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for all civilians in need, wherever they may be.”

The Rafah Crossing with Egypt, which has been a major conduit of humanitarian aid into the enclave, has remained shuttered since the IDF seized control of the Gazan side on May 7, as Egypt has insisted that it will not allow deliveries to resume until the crossing is back under Palestinian control.



Palestinians carry boxes of humanitarian aid after rushing the trucks transporting the international aid from the US-built Trident Pier near Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on May 18, 2024, amid the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas. (AFP)

According to Hebrew media reports, Israeli **officials will attempt to persuade the US to greenlight an expanded operation in Rafah** when US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan arrives in Israel later on Sunday, fresh from a visit to Saudi Arabia.

Israel will reportedly present findings from the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of civilians from Rafah to argue that a full-scale operation against the Hamas battalions there would not cause significant harm to the

population.

Washington said last week it had received assurances from Israel that it would not widen its operation before Sullivan arrived.

Meanwhile in Jabaliya in the Strip’s north, the IDF said, the Paratroopers Brigade killed several gunmen during several engagements; the 7th Armored Brigade located a primed rocket launcher and killed several more gunmen in battles; and the 460th Armored Brigade located several tunnel shafts and killed an RPG-wielding operative.

The IDF also said troops of the 460th Armored Brigade operating in the outskirts of Jabaliya

located and destroyed a weapons and long-range rocket manufacturing site, along with other military equipment.



These images released by the IDF on May 18, 2024, show equipment and long-range rockets found at a weapons manufacturing plant on the outskirts of northern Gaza’s Jabaliya. (Israel Defense Forces)

According to the IDF, the paratroopers have killed dozens of terror operatives during fierce clashes in the “heart of Jabaliya,” in neighborhoods that the military did not operate in previously, with drone footage showing soldiers killing two gunmen on a rooftop there.

Warning: Graphic

The IDF on Saturday evening called on

Palestinians in additional neighborhoods of northern Gaza to evacuate the area, as it pressed on with its operation against Hamas in Jabaliya, which officers have described as some of the most intense fighting of the war.

The **military first published an evacuation warning for Jabaliya last weekend** and has since twice expanded the evacuation zone. The latest announcement included the areas of al-Atatra and al-Karama on the coast.

Palestinian civilians were instructed to move to shelters west of Gaza City.

In the Strip's center, Palestinian media reported that some 20 people had been killed in a strike on Nuseirat refugee camp.

"We received 20 fatalities and several wounded after an Israeli airstrike targeted a house belonging to the Hassan family in Al-Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza," the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital said in a statement.

Witnesses said the strike occurred around 3 a.m. local time. The IDF said it was checking the report.

In the Netzarim Corridor area, the 99th Division continued to battle gunmen, including by calling in airstrikes, the IDF said.

In one incident in central Gaza, troops of the 414th Combat Intelligence Collection Unit spotted a cell that had fired RPGs at troops and directed a drone to strike and kill the operatives, the army added.

In a later statement, the IDF said the 162nd Division's 401st Armored Brigade raided sites in Rafah, where Hamas gunmen opened fire. The tank forces have killed more than 50 terror operatives in the area, and demolished some 100 sites, including rocket launchers, according to the IDF. **The troops also located more than 10 tunnel shafts, it added.**



IDF troops are seen operating in the Gaza Strip in an undated handout photo published May 19, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

The Givati Infantry Brigade, operating in the same area, has killed more than 80 terror operatives, the IDF said. The Givati troops also located tunnel networks in eastern Rafah.

The Kan public broadcaster reported on Saturday night that some 50 tunnels used to smuggle weapons and other supplies from Egypt to Gaza's terror groups had been discovered in Rafah.

In testimony at the International Court of Justice in The Hague on Friday, Israel's legal representatives warned that these 50 tunnels in

Rafah "could potentially be used to smuggle out of Gaza hostages."

In December, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel would need to take control of the so-called Philadelphi Corridor, which runs for 14 kilometers (8.7 miles) all along the Gaza-Egypt border, in order to ensure that Gaza is and remains demilitarized, to prevent weapons from being smuggled through tunnels into the coastal enclave.

Egypt has denied that weapons are smuggled to Gaza via tunnels, insisting that the measures it has taken in recent years — including the construction of a concrete border wall stretching six meters underground and topped with barbed wire — had put an end to the longstanding smuggling issue.

According to Egyptian officials, more than 1,500 smuggling tunnels have been destroyed over the past decade.

Amid the heavy fighting across the Strip, the IDF said on Sunday morning that one rocket launched from the northern part of the enclave at the southern city of Sderot was intercepted by the Iron Dome — the latest of a series of rocket attacks on the city over the past week.

On Saturday, terrorists in Gaza fired a barrage of some 10 rockets from the northern Strip at Ashkelon, according to the IDF.

The military said five rockets were intercepted, and the others struck open areas.

There were no reports of injuries or damage.

Ashkelon was also targeted on Saturday by a rocket launched from central Gaza, which the military said fell into the sea nearby, causing no damage or injuries. Sirens had sounded in the southern coastal city.

The war in Gaza erupted with Hamas's October 7 massacre, when some 1,200 people were slaughtered — most of them civilians — and 252 others were seized as hostages by thousands of invading terrorists.

The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry says more than 35,000 people in the Strip have been killed or are presumed dead in the fighting so far, though only some 24,000 fatalities have been identified at hospitals.

The tolls, which cannot be verified, include some 15,000 terror operatives Israel says it has killed in battle. Israel also says it killed some 1,000 terrorists inside Israel on October 7.

Two hundred and eighty-two Israeli soldiers have been killed during the ground offensive against Hamas and amid operations along the Gaza border. A civilian Defense Ministry contractor has also been killed in the Strip. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-says-2-soldiers-killed-4-seriously-wounded-during-fighting-in-southern-gaza/>

Goods from aid packages on sale at inflated prices in Gaza markets

War economy: Gaza markets sell baby formula and canned goods which were removed from foreign aid packages. NYT reports; Gazans accuse Hamas of profiting from looting; 'Armed gangs steal the aid, those who are not strong go home empty-handed'

Ynet|07:19

On tables and desks from schools that were converted into shelters, Gazans who became vendors wartime vendors sell second-hand clothes, baby formula, canned goods and also homemade cookies.

Many of those products, the New York Times reports on Sunday, come from foreign aid packages, and instead of the Gazans receiving them for free they are sold at prices that few in the Strip can afford. This is happening while Hamas, seven months after the start of the war, continues to control civilian areas of Gaza.

Issam Hamouda, 51, sits next to the small number of goods he is offering for sale: canned vegetables and corn from an aid package his family received. "Most of the products found in the markets are labeled 'not for sale'," he says. Before the start of the war he was a driving instructor. Now he supports his family of six children by selling some of the aid they receive every few weeks. "Once I got 4 kilos of dried dates and sold a kilo for 8 shekels," he told the New York Times.

The humanitarian aid is indeed labeled as "not for resale," but some of it - including looted products - often reaches the various markets. "The food aid is dropped or brought in and stolen by armed people like gangs," says Majeda Abu Eisha, a 49-year-old mother of 10.

According to her, while trying to get aid, her son and nephew were shot and injured by Israeli soldiers. They were unable to get the aid. "The winner in this battle is the armed one who can get whatever he wants from the aid," Eisha said. "Anyone who is not armed or strong enough to fight and push in goes home empty-handed."

The Times reports that a kilogram of sugar recently was sold in the markets in Rafah for 7 shekels. The next day, Hamas fired dozens of rockets into Kerem Shalom, and the crossing was closed. In the hours that followed, the price jumped to 25 shekels. A day later it dropped slightly to 20 shekels.

"The same item can be sold for different prices in the same market," said Sabah Abu-Ghanem, 25. "When the police are there, traders will sell things for the prices the police decide. When the police leave, prices go up immediately."



Aid is brought into Gaza by land, air and sea(Photos: Said Khatib/AFP, Yiannis Kourtoglou/Reuters, Mohammed Hajar/AP)

The residents say that officials affiliated with the Hamas-run government are present in some capacity, especially in the southern Gaza Strip. Although some Gazans said that the Hamas police were trying to prevent traders from trying to raise prices and profit from the war, others accused Hamas of actually being the one profiting from the looting of the aid.

Hamouda said that the aid he and his family occasionally receive comes from the Ministry of Social Development, which is operated by Hamas, and oversees the welfare programs in Gaza. He said that various products are sometimes missing from the packages, such as sugar, dates and cooking oil. The "missing" products are sold at much higher prices in the markets.

Hamas denied the claims. "The accusations that the government in Gaza is stealing aid are false," a Hamas official told the Times. <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/synxdpp7r#autoplay>

Smotrich: If Hezbollah doesn't withdraw from border, IDF must take southern Lebanon

After Gantz's ultimatum to Netanyahu, far-right leader issues his own demands to PM, including for military to establish a 'permanent presence in the entire Gaza Strip'

By [Tol Staff](#) Today, 4:37 pm

Israel should not shy away from launching a military takeover of southern Lebanon if Hezbollah does not withdraw from the border, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declared Sunday, becoming the latest minister to publicly challenge Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the handling of the conflict on Israel's northern and southern borders.

Speaking at a faction meeting of his far-right Religious Zionism party held, unusually, in northern Israel, Smotrich demanded that Netanyahu make a clear announcement of a plan to deal with the Iran-backed terror group, saying that if necessary, Hezbollah must be dealt with through military action.

"A public ultimatum must be issued to Hezbollah that they completely stop firing and withdraw all forces to beyond the Litani River," said Smotrich, who also serves as a minister in the Defense Ministry.

Promoting a plan reminiscent of Israel's security zone in southern Lebanon in the years following the First Lebanon war in 1982, Smotrich warned, "If the ultimatum is not fully met, the IDF will launch an assault deep in Lebanese territory to defend the northern communities, including ground entry and Israeli military takeover of the southern Lebanese area."

"The way to bring the [evacuated] residents home to the north is through a military decision with a devastating assault on Hezbollah, its infrastructure and the destruction of its power," he said.

Since October 8, Hezbollah-led forces have attacked Israeli communities and military posts along the border on a near-daily basis, with the group saying it is doing so to support Gaza amid the war against Hamas there.

In response, Israel has threatened to go to war to force Hezbollah away from the border if it does not retreat and continues to threaten northern communities, from where some 70,000 people were evacuated to avoid the fighting.

International efforts including by France and the US to resolve the matter through a diplomatic solution has thus far failed, as Hezbollah has maintained it will not enter into any concrete discussions with Israel until there is a ceasefire in Gaza, where Israel is battling Hamas in the wake of the October 7 massacre carried out by the terror group in southern Israel.



Religious Zionism party leader Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich (second left) leads a faction meeting in northern Israel, May 19, 2024. (Ayal Margolin/Flash90)

Smotrich also issued two demands concerning the Gaza Strip, which he said were a direct response to an ultimatum laid out by war cabinet minister Benny Gantz on Saturday night, signifying deepening rifts in the wartime coalition and dissatisfaction with Netanyahu's operational decisions from all sides.

In a televised address, Gantz told Netanyahu that if no clear plan of action has been set in motion by June 8, he will pull his centrist National Unity part from

the governing coalition and return to the opposition.

Charging that the war was drifting off course due to the cowardice of some leaders, Gantz laid out six strategic goals for Israel to work towards, including the return of the hostages, replacing Hamas with Israeli security control and an international civilian governance mechanism, and restoring safety to Israel's north by September 1.

His plan was met by outrage from right-wing members of government, including Smotrich, who said shortly after Gantz's address that the country would achieve victory with or without him.

Doubling down on his criticism of Gantz on Sunday, Smotrich claimed the former IDF chief of staff's ultimatum aimed for Israel "to stop the war, for Israel to be defeated in the north and for a Palestinian state to be established in line with the US's demands."

A day after urging Netanyahu "to make a strategic decision on full Israeli control of Gaza," Smotrich again called for Israel to establish additional points of control "in the center, south and north of the Strip."

Secondly, he argued, Israel should take complete control of Rafah and establish permanent control over the so-called Philadelphi Corridor, which runs along Gaza's border with Egypt in order to prevent weapons from being smuggled into the enclave.

The **war cabinet must decide on the IDF's "permanent presence in the entire Gaza Strip,"** the far-right minister added.

Smotrich's demands were derided by an unnamed senior official who was quoted by Hebrew media outlets accusing the far-right lawmaker of toeing a "dangerous and irresponsible strategic line" while making demands "with a noticeable lack of understanding."

"What's the next step?" the official was said to have asked, "conquering Iraq and Yemen?"

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/smotrich-if-hezbollah-doesnt-withdraw-from-border-idf-must-take-southern-lebanon/>

US Security Adviser Sullivan visits Israel to advance hostage, Saudi deals

Sullivan arrived in Israel Sunday from Saudi Arabia where he met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

By [TOVAH LAZAROFF](#) MAY 19, 2024 17:09

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan is in Jerusalem in an attempt to revive the frozen talks for a hostage deal and to advance a complex three-way deal with Saudi Arabia that includes a normalization deal with Israel.

Sullivan **arrived in Israel Sunday** from Saudi Arabia where he met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Given that **the US and Saudi Arabia are finalizing the details of a complex security pact, there is increased attention on the issue of a normalization agreement**, which can not happen while the Gaza war is ongoing.

The **Saudi Foreign Ministry said the two men "discussed the nearly final version of the draft strategic agreement" which has "almost been finalized."**

They **also explored ways to find a "credible pathway toward the two-state solution** in a way that meets the aspirations of the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights." In addition, they spoke of issues relating to the Gaza war and humanitarian assistance," the Saudi Foreign Ministry stated.

Sullivan met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu early in the afternoon and was expected to speak with President Isaac Herzog in the evening.

Strategic timing for official visit

The **visit comes as Netanyahu is at odds with the Biden administration over his plan for a major military operation in Rafah, where** the army is already operating.

US officials are also frustrated, as are members of Netanyahu's coalition, over the lack of a credible Day After plan for Gaza.

Israel has held fast to the concept that a military operation is the best way to destroy Hamas and retrieve the hostages. The US has come to believe that Hamas is best defeated diplomatically and not militarily, by tying the fate of Gaza to a Saudi normalization deal. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-801735>

Netanyahu blocking defense establishment chief from meeting US officials

Senior officials said there is growing paranoia and suspicion between Netanyahu and the heads of the defense establishment.

By WALLA! MAY 19, 2024 20:23



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seen with Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Mossad director David Barnea on May 12, 2023 (photo credit: KOBI GIDEON/GPO)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prevented the head of the Mossad, David Barnea, and the head of the Shin Bet, Ronen Bar, from meeting with the vice chairman of the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Republican Senator Marco Rubio, during his visit to Israel about three weeks ago, according to two senior American officials.

Netanyahu's decision not to approve the holding of the meetings joins a series of other cases since October 7 in which he prevented or tried to prevent American members of Congress and senior members of the Biden administration from meeting with the heads of the defense establishment and the intelligence community.

Senior **American and Israeli officials believe that the reason Netanyahu is preventing the holding of these meetings is his desire to control the message that members of Congress and senior officials in the Biden administration are hearing from the Israeli government**, at a time when tensions between Israel and the US are increasing. **[He is also probably trying to prevent collusion with US officials by some of his leftist people and those in the US. The amount of governmental subterfuge is amazing anymore. rdb]**

Rubio, who is considered a great supporter of Israel, visited Israel during the Passover holiday and asked to meet the heads of the Mossad and the Shin Bet as part of his role as vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee of the US Senate - one of the most important positions in Congress.

Netanyahu met Rubio but did not approve the meetings with the heads of the defense establishment and the intelligence community. Netanyahu's office and Rubio's office refused to comment on the matter.

Netanyahu suspicious of defense establishment

Netanyahu's move was not directed against Rubio. Senior American and Israeli officials say that the prevention of the meetings comes against a background of growing paranoia and suspicion between the prime minister and the heads of the defense establishment since the beginning of the war.

Many of the heads of the defense establishment and the intelligence community believe that the fact that Netanyahu refuses to discuss a strategy for the day after the war in Gaza harms Israeli interests.

Some of the heads of the defense establishment even believe that Netanyahu's decisions are motivated by considerations of political survival and not by considerations of national security, and that he is completely dependent on the extreme members of his government, Bezael Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir, who wish to eliminate the Palestinian Authority and occupy the Gaza Strip.

All heads of the Israeli defense establishment took responsibility for the failures of the October 7 attack. The head of Military Intelligence, Aharon Haliva, even resigned from his position. On the other hand, Netanyahu is the only senior Israeli government official who did not take responsibility.

Netanyahu and his supporters have been busy in recent months trying to direct the criticism of the October 7 failure toward the defense establishment and rejecting the claims that the political echelon's decision-making led to the disaster.

US officials traditionally meet with defense establishment heads

For **decades, delegations from the US Congress and senior officials from the White House** and the US State Department visiting Israel have met with the heads of the defense establishment and the intelligence community.

Senior American officials consider the senior officials of the IDF, the Mossad, the Shin Bet, and other security agencies to be trustworthy, professional, and non-political.

In recent months, Netanyahu, to whom the Shin Bet and the Mossad are directly subordinate, and who must approve meetings with American politicians or senior officials in advance, has tried to prevent them - and in many cases succeeded.

Only **one delegation of American senators has met with the heads of the Mossad and the Shin Bet since October 7. A source privy to the details said this was a significant decrease compared to the number of meetings of this type before the war.**

A senior American source said that since the beginning of the war, Netanyahu prevented several meetings between senior US State Department officials and the Shin Bet and Mossad officials.

A few months ago, Netanyahu tried to prevent a meeting between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi. The solution was for Halevi to join Blinken's meeting with Netanyahu and the members of the War Cabinet.

"There have been several cases of this type," said an American official. "It is clear to us that Netanyahu is trying to prevent the US government from receiving information about the war in Gaza that contradicts his line."

The **American official noted that Netanyahu's ban is only partially effective, and this is due to the close relationships between senior officials of the two countries who have found ways to circumvent the ban and work together.** <https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-801766>

Gazans say large quantities of aid are useless without meaningful solution

The Media Line spoke to people within the Gaza Strip who criticized the large-scale but ineffective aid distribution, asserting that Gazans need sustainable solutions rather than temporary relief.

By AHMED ABD AL-SALAM/THE MEDIA LINE MAY 19, 2024 02:38 **Updated:** MAY 19, 2024 02:50

The Media Line spoke to people within the Gaza Strip who criticized the large-scale but ineffective aid distribution, asserting that Gazans need sustainable solutions rather than temporary relief, and accused the UN and Arab countries of neglecting Gaza's children.

Gazans speak of struggle

Women and children voiced their frustration over the lack of stability and normalcy, with [no safe havens](#) available and children missing out on their education and playtime. Additionally, citizens expressed a desperate hope for a hostage exchange to bring an end to the war, emphasizing the dire need for safe areas. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-801666>

One civilian killed as Ukrainian drone strikes minibus – governor

“Many” civilians were also wounded in the attack on Russia’s Kherson Region, according to the local administration

19 May, 2024 08:10

One person has been killed and “many” others wounded in a Ukrainian drone strike on a minibus carrying civilians in Russia’s Kherson Region, Governor Vladimir Saldo said on Sunday.

The attack took place in the village of Radensk on Sunday morning, Saldo wrote on Telegram. The UAV targeted a vehicle with workers on their way to harvest strawberries, he added.

“The explosion killed one person. There are many wounded, who are receiving necessary medical assistance,” the governor said.

Russian regions have seen several attacks on buses by Ukrainian drones since the start of this month.

On May 6, seven people were killed and dozens wounded after UAVs targeted two minibuses carrying farmers near the village of Beryozovka in Belgorod Region.

Two days earlier, two people were injured when a drone struck a bus in the village of Voznesenka, also in Belgorod Region.

Russia's Defense Ministry said on Sunday that "a number of attempts by the Kiev regime to carry out terrorist attacks" on Russian territory with the use of US-supplied ATACMS missiles and drones were prevented overnight.

Nine ATACMS were shot down by air defenses over Crimea, while a total of 57 drones were intercepted in the Krasnodar Region, the ministry said. Three UAVs were destroyed in Belgorod Region, it added.

<https://www.rt.com/russia/597841-kherson-drone-minibus-ukraine/>

Fico's condition 'no longer life-threatening' – Slovak deputy PM

The prime minister will survive, Tomas Taraba has said

19 May, 2024 10:00



Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico © AFP / Attila Kisbenedek

The condition of Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico is no longer life-threatening, the EU country's deputy prime minister Tomas Taraba has told British state broadcaster the BBC. There was an attempt on his life earlier this week.

Fico was shot several times on Wednesday as he approached a crowd in the city of Handlova in central Slovakia. The prime minister was rushed to a hospital and doctors have been fighting for his life since.

The assailant, who was detained on the spot, turned out to be 71-year-old left-wing activist Juraj Cintula. He **reportedly strongly disagreed with Fico's decision to stop arms shipments to Ukraine.**

The **prime minister is "not in a life-threatening situation at this moment,"** Taraba said on Sunday. "Fortunately, as far as I know, the operation went well – and I guess in the end he will survive," he added.

According to the deputy prime minister, Fico was "heavily injured" in the attack. "One bullet went through the stomach and the second one hit a joint – he was immediately transported to the hospital and then operated-on," he said.

Milan Urbani, deputy head of the hospital where the Slovak leader is being treated, said earlier on Sunday that the board of doctors had ruled that **"the patient is currently no longer in a life-threatening state."**

Urbani described **Fico's condition as "very serious,"** saying that the 59-year-old "needs a lot of time and peace to recover." However, he stressed that the doctors believe that *"everything will develop in a positive direction."*

Earlier in **the day, around a hundred people gathered outside the hospital** in the town of Banska Bystrica to support Fico and thank the doctors who are taking care of him, police said. Well-wishers brought flowers to the rally, according to media reports.

Fico, who returned to power last year, is a polarizing figure both in Slovakia and the EU, due to his position regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which he insists must be settled through peaceful means, and due to his intention to mend relations with Moscow.

Many Slovak politicians have linked the attempt on the PM's life to *"hateful rhetoric"* and to the politically charged climate in the country. <https://www.rt.com/news/597843-fico-slovakia-assassination-attempt/>

The Surprising Potential of Ivermectin Against Cancer: Dr. Kathleen Ruddy

May-14-2024

[FULL TRANSCRIPT BELOW] **"I was as astonished as anyone might be that ivermectin has potential as an anti-cancer agent," says cancer surgeon Dr. Kathleen Ruddy.**

She's observed multiple cases where patients with severe, late stage cancer started to make a turn for the better after taking ivermectin.

One patient with stage four prostate cancer tried all the traditional protocols like chemotherapy and radiation before being told that there was nothing left that his doctors could do. He started taking ivermectin as a last resort. In a few short months, he had made a stunning recovery.

After observing several cases like this, Dr. Ruddy decided to launch a multicenter observational study on how repurposed drugs like ivermectin impact cancer survival rates.

Why would an anti-parasitic medication like ivermectin work on cancer? Are these isolated cases, or are they indicative of a major breakthrough? She's on a mission to find out.

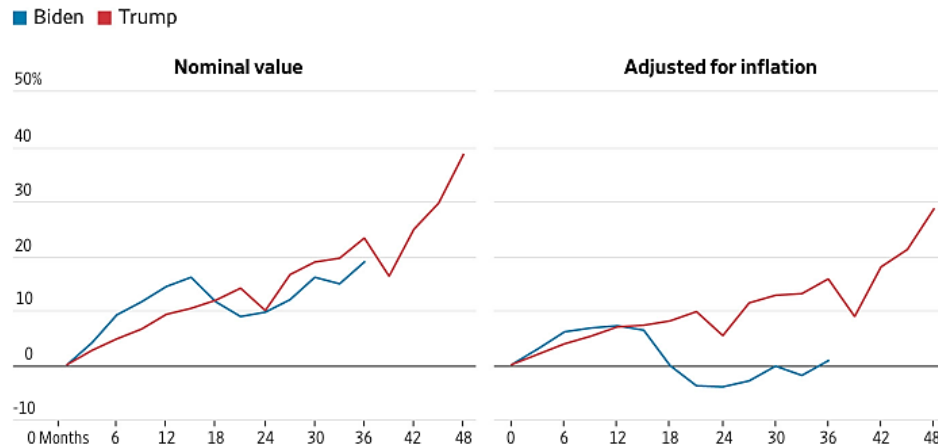
Full Transcript:

<https://www.theepochtimes.com/epochtv/the-surprising-potential-of-ivermectin-against-cancer-dr-kathleen-ruddy-5649306>

This isn't too shabby for a supposed "HORSE PILL". You have to wonder how many other anti-Cancer agents have been hidden by big pharm?????? RDB

Most interesting statistical graph. Are better off today that 3 YEARS ago??? rdb

Change in household net worth since start of presidency



Notes: Biden data is through December 2023. Seasonally adjusted.
Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

A most illuminating interview concerning the world's situation now. rdb

Martin Armstrong: 'West Governments Need War Because Their Debts Are No Longer Sustainable'

Interview with Martin Armstrong by Piero Messina for SouthFront

Martin Armstrong is one of the most influential economists of our times. Someone called him the "Forecaster", because that was the title of the biopic film that helped make his activities known throughout the world.

Those of Martin Armstrong are not just "predictions", as his reflections are based on the compendium of precise mathematical formulas and analytical skills. We interviewed him to try to understand the current geopolitical context. From the crisis of Western democracies to the birth of the BRICS front, to arrive at profound reflections on the risk of a military conflict on a global scale, Armstrong interprets real-time data thanks to his diachronic "vision" and a decades-long effort of research and analysis. Armstrong's work allows us to connect knowledge of the past to critical factors of the present time. For all these reasons, Armstrong's analyzes are precious for understanding the present and orienting ourselves towards a future that appears full of unknowns and pitfalls.

Fukuyama advocated the end of history. Huntington spoke of a clash of civilizations. Is it possible to imagine a third way?

Our greatest threat is centralized control; that is what doomed communism. I agree with Huntington that the clash of civilizations will be based upon cultures and religion mainly because of centralized attempt to impose a unified culture.

At the end of the 1980s, the reference geopolitical model was the unipolar world, based on Western primacy. What cultural, military, and economic pillars is the Washington Consensus based on? Is it true freedom?

The military in economic pillars that dominate Washington today have nothing to do with freedom. They have to do with people who were unwilling to accept the collapse of communism. Whereby the enemy was transformed by communism to ethnic racism.

With the birth of the BRICS, is it possible to talk about a multipolar option? What are the limits that you see in this geopolitical dimension?

The birth of the BRICS was caused by these people we call the neocons who engaged in ethnic racism and targeted Russia by removing them from the world economy under SWIFT. This woke up many in the world, realizing that the dollar was now being weaponized and was no longer a monetary instrument exclusively. Nations began to realize if they did not conform to the commands of Washington, then they could be removed from SWIFT. Thus they have divided the world economy bringing to an end globalization.

Your analysis and studies seems to reveal several critical issues regarding the stability of the so-called Western system. There is a profound crisis of democratic systems, there is a lot of mistrust towards mainstream information and above all there are “agents” external to the institutions (an example above all is the activity of George Soros) who seem to influence the choices of governments in the United States and Western Europe. What could happen in the immediate future and in the coming years?

It has been propaganda that we live under a democracy. We live under republics in which case the people are represented and have no right to vote on critical issues. Republics historically are the most corrupt forms of government compared to a monarchy or dictatorship which cannot be bribed. In a republic, all representatives lacking term limits are up for sale to the highest bidder. This has resulted in the collapse of confidence in government both in Europe and the US which have fallen below 30% – the lowest since WWII. External agents such as George Soros, Bill Gates, World Economic Forum, push personal agendas which has further undermined the confidence in our systems. It is the government that decides if we go to war or not. The people are never asked.

Now, We invite you to make some reflections on the geoeconomic dimension. The global capitalist system is based on the indebtedness of sovereign states. Is this a sustainable situation? Who will pay the bill in the end?

The sovereign debt crisis that we face has appeared often throughout history. It is unsustainable because governments act in their own self-interest and will always expand debt to retain power. Historically, these systems collapse when they issue new debt to pay off the old, and no one is there to buy the new debt. Once they can no longer continue to borrow new money, then inevitably, they collapse.

Your predictive model is based on precise calculations. The cycles of history and the economy thus seem to chase each other along the time span of history. If I’m not mistaken, you compared the current context to the crisis and dissolution of the Roman Empire. Is it correct?

History repeats because human nature never changes. The Roman Empire is but one example from history of its success and failures. It lasted longer than anyone because it did not impose cultural regulations. The Christians called them pagans because they had so many Gods. That was the product of their policy of freedom of religion. Athens had Athena, Northern Europe had Thor, so they did not try to change the culture of the lands they conquered. They created a common market where someone in Britain could sell products to someone in Rome. So the freedom of religion, low taxation, freedom of movement, and a common market combined to create the Pax Romana.

Is it still possible to avoid a large-scale world conflict?

It is unlikely that we can avoid world war. Governments need war because their debts are no longer sustainable. They will use the war as the excuse for defaults – as was the case for WWII. They will create Bretton Woods II with the IMF digital currency as the reserve.

Pope Francis has been talking about a piecemeal Third World War for years. From your point of view, is what the Holy Father claims can be shared? What are the main weapons of this possible Third World War?

I believe we have a third world war that will begin piecemeal with the Middle East, Iran vs Israel, Europe vs Russia, north Korea vs Japan and South Korea, China vs Taiwan. But they will eventually merge together.

Have you argued that the true wealth of a state is its people? Why did we forget about all this? Above all, who is it convenient for?

The wealth of every nation is its people. That has been proven with the rise of Germany and Japan after WWII. This is the essence of Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand." But those in government prefer Marx, for he advocates that the state has the power to manipulate the people. So, Governments have forgotten it and reject Smith because Marx provides them with more power.

Is it correct to claim that your analysis succeed in covering the intersection of geopolitics, Global Markets and Economic Confidence? Can you explain to us in a simple way how your Socrates predictive model works? By the way, why did you name it just like the Greek philosopher?

I named my computer model after Socrates because the oracle of Delphi had said that he was the smartest man in Greece. He tried to prove the oracle wrong and the process proved it to be correct. He was put on trial and sentenced to death because he knew too much. My computer has taught me a lot in geopolitics, we had a major bank in Lebanon in the 1980's and they asked if I could create a model on the Lebanese pound. I put the data in the computer and it came out and said their country would fall apart in 8 days. I thought something was wrong with the data. When I told the client, they asked me what currency would be best, and I said the Swiss Franc. Eight days later the civil war began. Obviously they saw the movement of money themselves and came to me for the timing. The same thing happened with a client in Saudi Arabia who was a big shipper. He called me asking me what gold would do tomorrow because Iran was going to begin attacking shipping in the gulf. So once again, there was advanced information about war. By 1998, I understood how the computer was forecasting such events. I warned in June at our London conference that Russia was about to collapse. The London financial Times had snuck into the back of the room and reported that forecast on the front of their newspaper on June 27th 1998. Russia collapsed about 6 weeks later.

Are unpredictable events, such as the terrorist attack in Moscow, also considered among the parameters of your predictive model? A "black swan" type event can change the course of history and geopolitical relations?"

Yes, we saw the capital flows shift a day in advance, up to a week in advance in the case of the attack in Israel. The defense stocks began to rise even with 9/11 the government used our model to look at who bought puts on airlines in the days before. Someone always knows when they're going to do these types of events. And they move their money either to profit or to avoid a loss. The computer is tracking everything. It cannot tell me which person has done it. Just that the move is about to take place.

<https://southfront.press/martin-armstrong-west-governments-need-war-because-their-debts-are-no-longer-sustainable>

This is a relatively long but most interesting observation of the activities of China. rdb

China's growing power over Latin America

While the U.S. slumbers, Beijing is hard at work.

<https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/editorials/2023/12/16/chinas-growing-power-over-latin-america/>