



**Written Testimony of
Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) National President Morton A. Klein¹**

**Hearing on: A NEW HORIZON IN U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS: FROM AN
AMERICAN EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM TO POTENTIAL RECOGNITION OF
ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE GOLAN HEIGHTS**

**Before the
House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on National Security
Tuesday July 17, 2018, 10:00 a.m.
Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2154
Chairman Ron DeSantis (R-FL)
Ranking Member Stephen Lynch (D-MA)**

Introduction & Summary

Chairman DeSantis, Vice Chairman Russell, Ranking Member Lynch, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for holding this hearing to discuss the potential for American recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, in furtherance of U.S. national security interests.

Israeli sovereignty over the western two-thirds of the Golan Heights is a key bulwark against radical regimes and affiliates that threaten the security and stability of the United States, Israel, the entire Middle East region, and beyond.

The Golan Heights consists of strategically-located high ground, that provides Israel with an irreplaceable ability to monitor and take counter-measures against growing threats at and near the Syrian-Israel border. These growing threats include the extremely dangerous hegemonic expansion of the Iranian-Syrian-North Korean axis; and the presence in Syria, close to the Israeli border, of: Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Quds forces; thousands of Iranian-armed Hezbollah fighters; Palestinian Islamic Jihad (another Iranian proxy); Syrian forces; and radical Sunni Islamist groups including the al Nusra Levantine Conquest Front (an incarnation of al Qaeda) and ISIS.

The Iranian regime is attempting to build an 800-mile land bridge to the Mediterranean, running through Iraq and Syria. Among other things, this would enable Iran to obtain naval ports, far from Iran's mainland, that enhance Iran's ability to deliver advanced weaponry and

¹ ZOA Director of Special Projects Elizabeth Berney, Esq. assisted with this written testimony.

support to Hezbollah and Iran's other proxies that wreak terror throughout the world. This major strategic threat makes it more important than ever to shore up Israel's position in the Golan.

Several times during the recent past (including just last week), Israel intercepted drones launched and controlled from Syria, with the assistance of Iranian Quds forces. In response, Israel's air force destroyed Iranian/Quds Forces and Syrian aerial and launch facilities in Syria. In February, surface-to-air missiles in Syria shot down an Israeli F-16 fighter jet. Such alarming recent incidents confirm the presence of the Iranian front in Syria, and vividly demonstrate the necessity for assuring Israeli sovereignty over the Golan.

During a major campaign speech in March 2016, then candidate-Trump recognized the dangers of the Iranian front in Syria, along with multiple other Iranian malign activities, stating:

I speak to you today as a lifelong supporter and true friend of Israel. . . . **Iran is a problem in Iraq, a problem in Syria**, a problem in Lebanon, a problem in Yemen and will be a very, very major problem for Saudi Arabia. Literally every day, **Iran provides more and better weapons to support their puppet states.** Hezbollah, Lebanon . . . has received sophisticated anti-ship weapons, anti-aircraft weapons and GPS systems and rockets like very few people anywhere in the world and certainly very few countries have. **Now they're in Syria trying to establish another front against Israel from the Syrian side of the Golan Heights.** In Gaza, Iran is supporting Hamas and Islamic jihad. And in the West Bank, they're openly offering Palestinians \$7,000 per terror attack and \$30,000 for every Palestinian terrorist's home that's been destroyed. A deplorable, deplorable situation.²

America's moderate Sunni Arab allies could very well be quietly pleased by U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty in the Golan, in that this would help to stem Iranian aggression and the very same malign actors confronting our Arab allies. Indeed, this past May, after the Iranian Quds Force launched 20 rockets from Syria into the Israeli Golan Heights, and the Israeli Air Force responded by striking dozens of military targets in Syria that belonged to Iran's Quds Force, Bahrain issued a statement supporting Israel's right to defense herself by destroying sources of danger, and criticizing Iran for using its missiles to destabilize the region.³

The necessity for recognizing Israel's retention of the Golan was also dramatically demonstrated during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Israel's presence on the Golan provided Israel with the strategic depth (of 8 to 16 miles) that enabled Israeli forces to assemble and push back Syria's initially effective surprise invasion. Without the Golan, Syrian forces could have overrun and annihilated Israel.

Today, Israel faces danger on five major fronts: (i) Syria; (ii) Lebanon, where Hezbollah has over 100,000 advanced rockets pointed at Israel; (iii) Gaza, where Iranian proxies Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad incessantly attack Israel with thousands of rockets (including 200

² "Donald Trump's Speech to AIPAC" transcript, Time Mag., Mar. 21, 2016, at <http://time.com/4267058/donald-trump-aipac-speech-transcript/>

³ See, e.g., @khalidalkhalifa – May 10, 2018 tweet, at <https://twitter.com/hassanabdalnabi/status/994542859457122304>

projectiles this past Friday and Saturday⁴), terror tunnels and arson kites, and attempt to invade Israel to murder Jews; (iv) Palestinian-Arab terrorism, including knifing, shooting and car ramming attacks, emanating largely from Arab villages in the Palestinian Authority; and (v) the Egyptian Sinai border, where ISIS affiliate Ansar Bait al-Maqdis and other terrorist groups attempt to infiltrate and attack Israelis.⁵ Strengthening Israel's ability to retain the Golan is essential for withstanding such multi-pronged dangers.

Because Israel is our front line in the war to defeat radical Islamist terror, it is surely in America's self-interest to ensure that Israel maintains and enhances her ability to defend herself.

In sum, bolstering Israel's sovereignty over the Golan by conferring formal U.S. recognition clearly serves U.S. national security interests. It would accordingly be eminently sensible to agree to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request to President Trump and Vice President Pence for U.S. recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan.⁶

There are moreover no possible security arrangements that can substitute for the topographical advantages, early warning locations and strategic depth provided by Israel's retention of the Golan.

Israeli President Reuven summed it up, saying:

"The nations of the world must formally recognize that the Golan is an integral part of the state of Israel, and is essential to our existence as a people. The Golan Heights are strategic to the State of Israel's ability to exist as a people able to safeguard its borders."⁷

In other words, Israel cannot cede the Golan.

Conferring U.S. recognition is moreover "the right thing to do." Israel has the strongest ancient and modern historical claim, evidenced by numerous archeological finds, including dozens of ancient Jewish synagogues, villages and towns in the Golan Heights.

Israel also has the legal right to the Golan – stemming from the Golan's inclusion in the 1922 League of Nations Mandate, agreed to by the U.S. in an internationally binding treaty. The Mandate required Britain to hold the area in trust for the reestablishment of the Jewish homeland. However, Britain unlawfully traded the Golan to the French for rights to Iraqi oil

⁴ "Three Wounded As 200 Projectiles Fired At Israel From Gaza Strip," by Anna Ahronheim, *Jerusalem Post*, July 14, 2018, at https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IDF-strikes-terror-tunnels-as-31-Hamas-rockets-fired-to-southern-Israel-562479?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=15-7-2018&utm_content=idf-strikes-terror-tunnels-as-31-hamas-rockets-fired-to-southern-israel-562479

⁵ *The 5 Major Threats Facing Israel*, IDF News, Apr. 6, 2015 <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/terror-and-threats/the-5-major-threats-facing-israel/>

⁶ "Netanyahu To Trump: Recognize Golan Heights As Part Of Israel," by Tovah Lazaroff, *Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 16, 2017, at <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Netanyahu-to-Trump-Recognize-Golan-Heights-as-part-of-Israel-481676>

⁷ "Ex-Ministers Call on US to Recognize Israel's Hold on Golan Heights," by i24 News, July 1, 2018, at <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/israel/diplomacy-defense/178463-180701-ex-ministers-call-on-us-to-recognize-golan-as-israel-s>

fields. UN Resolution 242, following Israel regaining the Golan in a defensive war in 1967, did *not* require Israel to return to the pre-1967 lines. Moreover, UN Resolution 242 first and foremost entitles Israel to secure and recognized borders.

Further, there was no peace during the 21 years when Syria fully controlled the Golan (1946-1967). Syria neglected the Golan's civilian development. Instead, Syria used the Golan Heights to continually harass and shoot at Israeli farmers and other Israeli civilians in the Hula Valley (Galilee) below; attempted to divert vital Israeli water sources; and used the Golan as a staging ground to wage out-and-out war against Israel in 1948-1949, 1967 and 1973.

By contrast to Syria's neglect and abuses, during the 51 years that the Golan has been under the State of Israel's governance, Israel has developed the area into an oasis of agriculture, wineries, tourism, archeological restoration and preservation, and religious co-existence.

Israel protects the lives, and religious rights and sites of all faiths in the Israeli Golan. Moreover, Israel's field hospital in the Golan Heights provides vital humanitarian assistance to Syrian victims of Syria's civil war.

By contrast, Bashar al-Assad Syrian regime, and other groups that would move in to the Golan in Israel's absence, have a record of brutalizing and murdering civilians, creating massive refugee crises, and destroying the world's religious and archeological heritage.

As former IDF Chief of Staff and former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, and Israel's Yesh Atid party Chair and former Israeli Finance Minister Yair Lapid wrote last week, while calling on the U.S. to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan:

"We live in a world full of complex diplomatic dilemmas, but for once here is a simple one: Would you take an area that is flourishing in a western democratic state, where fifty thousand people of different religions and ethnicities live in harmony, and hand it over to a violent dictatorship ruled by the worst mass murderer of our time so that he can destroy the area and murder most of the residents?"

If your answer is "no" then you support recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights."⁸

Further, after waiting half a century for Syria to make peace, it makes no sense to withhold recognition of Israeli sovereignty for additional decades or even centuries, in deference to the pipe dream of an imaginary, suicidal, future Israeli-Syrian "peace deal." Syria rejected Ehud Barak's over-generous, foolhardy offer to cede the Golan in return for peace. Syria has not even engaged in negotiations for the past eight years.

⁸ "Will the West cede the Golan Heights to a Psychopath?: We call on the US to lead an international process to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the territory," by Moshe Yaalon and Yair Lapid, *Times of Israel*, July 1, 2018, at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/will-the-west-cede-the-golan-heights-to-a-psychopath/>

Syria has moreover fallen into such disarray that there is no reasonable actor in Syria capable of making or enforcing an agreement.

Further, in recent years, Syria and other groups operating in Syria have repeatedly breached the 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria. In addition to the drone and rocket incursions into Israel, United Nations observers in the disengagement zone between Israel and Syria (members of UNDOF, the UN Disengagement Observer Force) have been attacked and kidnapped. Thus, even if a peace deal could be negotiated, it is virtually a certainty that it would not be kept.

Indeed, the “land for peace” mantra has repeatedly been shown to be an abysmal failure, including on the Golan. The same areas of the eastern Golan that Israel withdrew from, under the 1974 Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement, are now staging ground for attacks on Israel.

In sum, maintaining and recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan is the truest route to peace and a more stable world and Middle East.

A. The Golan Heights’ Jewish History

In Biblical times, the Golan Heights was referred to as “Bashan”; the word “Golan” was derived from the biblical city Golan, in Bashan. The area was assigned to the Hebrew tribe of Manasseh.⁹ In Deuteronomy 4:43, Moses designated “Golan in the Bashan of the Menassites” as a sanctuary city.¹⁰

Jews lived in villages in the Golan, and built and worshiped in dozens of synagogues throughout the Golan, through many centuries. There was a substantial Jewish presence in the Golan during the First Temple period (953-586 BCE), and again commencing upon the Jewish return from Babylonian exile later in the same century (the 6th century BCE), continuing through the Second Temple period, and for approximately another 600 years after the destruction of the Second Temple, until the Arab conquest in the seventh century CE, and even beyond that into the eighth century CE, until an earthquake in 749 CE destroyed several Jewish cities in the Golan.¹¹

In the mid-2nd century BCE, Judah Maccabee and his brothers came to the aid of the local Jewish communities in the Golan when the latter came under attack.¹²

After the traumatic Bar Kochba Revolt (132-135 CE) in Judea, many Jews moved north from Judea and settled in the Golan, and lived there in peace and quiet until the 7th to 8th century CE.

⁹ See “Golan Heights: History & Overview,” Jewish Virtual Library, at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-the-golan-heights>; Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 21:27; Joshua 13:29-31.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 4:43, at https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9968/jewish/Chapter-4.htm

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

One of the most famous Jewish cities in the Golan was Gamla, founded in the first century BCE. Gamla is often referred to as the “Masada of the North,” and was the site of battles in 66-67 CE, reported by Josephus Flavius. The Jews initially repelled the Roman soldiers, but the Romans returned and slaughtered thousands of Jews. Thousands of other Jews jumped to their deaths so as not to be enslaved or murdered by the Romans. Gamla’s ancient synagogue, mikvah (ritual bath), homes, fortifications, Hebrew coins and other artifacts were uncovered in archeological excavations since the 1970s. Today Gamla is an Israeli national park and tourist site.¹³

Emphasizing the Jewish people’s lengthy historic connection to the Golan, in April 2016, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu convened a cabinet meeting in the Israeli town of Ma’aleh Gamla, next to the Gamla archaeological site. PM Netanyahu vowed that the Golan will remain part of Israel forever, and that the border will not change. The prime minister added:

*“[A]fter 50 years it is time that the international community realized that the Golan will remain under Israeli sovereignty. The Golan was an integral part of the Land of Israel in ancient times. That is documented by dozens of ancient synagogues around us. And the Golan is an integral part of the State of Israel in the present time.”*¹⁴

Another important Jewish historical site, located in the central Golan, is the ancient Jewish village of Katzrin. Katzrin’s synagogue and homes were excavated and restored by Israel in the decades following the Six Day War. The Katzrin synagogue was built in the 4th to 5th century CE, oriented towards Jerusalem, in accordance with Jewish law. In the 6th century CE, the synagogue was rebuilt and paved with colored mosaics. The synagogue was still in use after the Muslim conquest in the 7th century CE, until most of the city was destroyed in an earthquake in 749 CE.¹⁵

The village and large synagogue of Umm El-Kanatir,¹⁶ built in the 5th to 6th century CE, and painstakingly restored by Israel, is still another important and fascinating Jewish historical site in the Golan Heights. The synagogue had columns with a figure of a menorah and shofar; a bimah (alter) in front of the ark approached by a short flight of stairs, and an upper level. As was the case in Katzrin, Jewish life continued in Umm El-Kanatir until the earthquake in 749 CE destroyed much of the area.

The Golan was part of the Ottoman empire from 1517-1917. In the 1880s, while the Golan was still under Ottoman rule, Jews and Jewish charitable societies returned and purchased and

¹³ See “Archeology in Israel: Gamla,” Jewish Virtual Library, at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/gamla>

¹⁴ “Why Israel Should Keep the Golan Heights,” by Steve Postal, *American Thinker*, Apr. 27, 2016, at https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/04/why_israel_should_keep_the_golan_heights_.html; and “Netanyahu Vows Golan Heights Will Remain Part of Israel Forever,” by Raphael Ahren, *Times of Israel*, Apr. 17, 2016, at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-vows-golan-heights-will-remain-part-of-israel-forever/>

¹⁵ “Katzrin-A Village in the Golan,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nov. 20, 2000, at <http://www.israel.org/MFA/IsraelExperience/History/Pages/Katzrin%20-%20A%20Village%20in%20the%20Golan.aspx>

¹⁶ “The Synagogue Of Umm El-Kanatir: One of the most fascinating synagogues on the Golan Heights is being carefully reconstructed,” by Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg, *Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 19, 2009, at <https://www.jpost.com/Magazine/Features/The-synagogue-of-Umm-el-Kanatir>

farmed extensive lands in the Golan. In 1891, philanthropist Baron Rothschild purchased around 18,000 acres in the Golan for Jewish farming and development.

As discussed below, the Golan was part of the area that the League of Nations mandate designated as a “sacred trust” for reconstituting the Jewish homeland, which the U.S. agreed to in a binding treaty obligation.

Some of the Golan’s lengthy Jewish history was succinctly described in *Israel National News* as follows:

“The Bashan region, now known as the Golan Heights, is a part of the biblical territory promised to the Patriarch Abraham and the people of Israel for an everlasting covenant — the Covenant of the Parts — recounted in Genesis 15. The city of Bashan was a refuge city (Deut, 4:43).

During the biblical period of the Jewish Kings, a battle high on the Golan took place between King Ahab and the army of Aram. A Jewish victory occurred at the present site of Kibbutz Afik, which lies a few miles east of Lake Kinneret, the Sea of Galilee.

After the end of the Babylonian Exile, and during the Second Temple Period, Jews returned to their homes on the Golan. Subsequently the returnees were attacked by [the Seleucids] and Judah Maccabee brought his forces up to the Heights to defend them.

At the conclusion of the Hasmonean Period, King Alexander Yannai finally reconquered the Golan and Jews returned yet again. They rebuilt communities in central Golan, including the major cities of Banias and Susita, which formed part of the defense of the Golan.

Their residents fought heroically against the Roman legions during the Great Revolt of 135 AD, known also as the Second Uprising. It was led by the charismatic Shimon Bar Kokhba, known as the "Son of a Star" and a Jewish folk hero as great as King Arthur. Some 10,000 residents of Gamla alone perished fighting against Rome.

Second century Jewish coins were found on the Golan after its liberation during the last days of the June, 1967 Six Day War. These ancient coins were inscribed with the words, "For the Redemption of Holy Jerusalem."

In the succeeding period of the Talmudic Period, Jewish communities flourished and expanded. **Archaeologists have found the remains of 34 synagogues on the Golan.** Jewish life on the Golan largely ended after the defeat of the Byzantine army by Arabs from Arabia carrying the new banner of Islam and the region descended into a long period of neglect.

But Jewish life returned yet again in the latter years of the 19th century when members of the Bnei Yehuda society from Safed purchased land on the Golan. In 1891, Baron Rothschild purchased around 18,000 acres in what is present day Ramat Magshimim.

The Jewish pioneers of the First Aliyah (immigration) began to farm land they had

purchased in the Horan region until the Turkish Ottoman occupiers evicted them in 1898. Their land was then seized, and **in 1923 the entire Golan was given away by Britain to the French Mandate over Syria and Lebanon.**

Zionist leaders had earlier demanded the Golan be included within the new Jewish National Home because of its immense historical roots in biblical and post-biblical Jewish history. But Jewish liberation of the ancestral land was not possible until Israel was forced to fight for its very survival during the Six Day War.¹⁷

In addition to the Golan's multiple important Jewish sites, the Golan also contains other archeological sites greatly cherished by the free world, which Israel has painstakingly excavated and safeguarded, including Hippos/Sussita, the ruins of the Byzantine Christian monastery at Kursi, Nimrod Fortress, and the mysterious, 5,000-year-old Stonehenge-like monument Gilgal Refaim (wheel of giants).¹⁸ As a commentator wrote, regarding the Golan Heights' Jewish, Christian and other archeological sites:

"If these sites were no longer protected by Israel, they could find themselves in the hands of a jihadist group like the Islamic State, which destroyed [world-renowned archeological sites](#) like the Temple of Ba'al, Jonah's Tomb, and the ancient ruins of Nimrud and Nineveh."¹⁹

B. Israel's Legal Right to the Golan Heights:

The Golan Heights was part of the 1922 League of Nations Mandate for Palestine,²⁰ which required Britain to hold and develop the area as a sacred trust "*to secure the establishment of the Jewish national home,*"²¹ and to "*facilitate Jewish immigration . . . [and] close settlement*

¹⁷ "The Golan Heights: History and Biblical Significance," by Victor Sharpe, *Israel Nat'l News*, Oct. 13, 2012, at <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/12300>

¹⁸ "Mysterious 'Wheel of Giants' IS as old as Stonehenge: Experts confirm Golan Heights circle is 5,000 years old and may have been used for gruesome 'sky burials,'" *Daily Mail*, Nov. 11, 2015, at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3313626/Prehistoric-Stonehenge-monument-Golan-Heights-fuels-mystery.html>

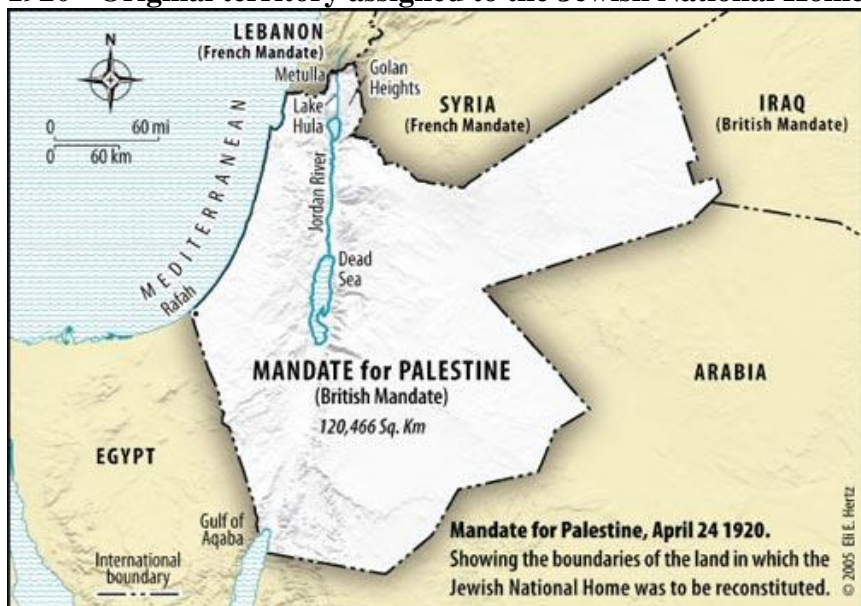
¹⁹ "Why Israel Should Keep the Golan Heights," by Steve Postal, *American Thinker*, Apr. 27, 2016, at https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/04/why_israel_should_keep_the_golan_heights_.html (citing "Here Are the Ancient Sites ISIS Has Damaged and Destroyed: Shocking destruction in the Syrian city of Palmyra is part of the militant group's ongoing campaign against archaeology," by Andrew Curry, *National Geographic*, Sept. 1, 2015, at <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/09/150901-isis-destruction-looting-ancient-sites-iraq-syria-archaeology/>)

²⁰ The Mandate for Palestine, July 24, 1922, at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/the%20mandate%20for%20palestine.aspx> Until the late 1960s, it was universally understood that the word "Palestinian" referred to Jews, and that "Palestine" was the Jewish homeland. The Israeli Jewish newspaper was called the "Palestine Post." The Israeli Jewish orchestra was called the "Palestine Orchestra." The American movement to reestablish the Jewish State was called the "American League for a Free Palestine." The Israeli Jewish hero of Exodus stated: "I am a native-born Palestinian."

²¹ Mandate, *Id.*, Article 2

of Jews on the land.”²² Maps of the Mandate for Palestine²³ show that the Golan was included in the area assigned to Britain’s care, designated for the Jewish homeland – both before and after Britain carved off the eastern 78% of the original Palestine mandatory area and gave it to the Hashemites to form Transjordan (later Jordan). The maps also show that the **French** Mandate for Syria did **not** include the Golan Heights:

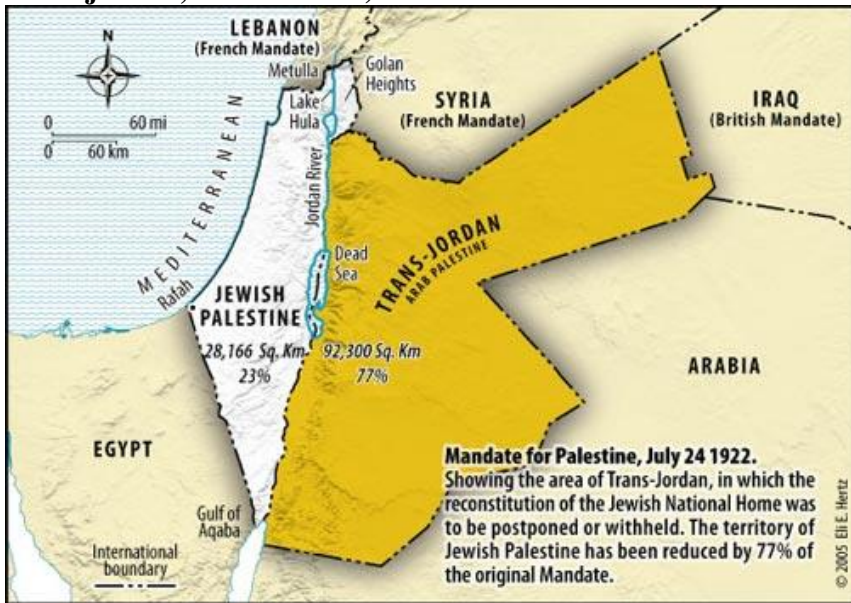
1920 - Original territory assigned to the Jewish National Home:



²² Mandate, *Id.*, Article 6.

²³ Maps reprinted from “‘Mandate for Palestine’: The Legal Aspects of Jewish Rights,” by Eli E. Hertz, *Myths & Facts*, at http://www.mythsandfacts.org/conflict/mandate_for_palestine/mandate_for_palestine.htm

1922 - Final territory assigned to the Jewish National Home (after Britain carved off the eastern portion of the Palestine Mandate, and gave it to the Hashemites to form Transjordan, later Jordan):



The 1924 Anglo-American Convention (Treaty) between the United States and Britain confirmed and reiterated the League of Nations Mandate to Britain to hold the area in trust for reestablishing the Jewish homeland and Jewish settlement.²⁴ The Anglo-American Convention was ratified by the U.S. President and Senate in 1925, thus making it a binding U.S. treaty obligation, and the Supreme law of the land in the United States.²⁵

However, without authorization, Britain gave the Golan away to France, primarily in return for France providing Britain with Iraqi oil field concessions. The “Franco-British Agreement on Northern Border” (dated March 7, 1923) illegally removed the Golan from the British Mandate area designated for the reestablishment of the Jewish State, and placed it within the French Mandate for Syria.²⁶

Extensive Jewish landholdings and farms in the Golan were lost to Syria in the process of Britain giving away to France the Jewish people’s birthright to the Golan.

Dr. Kenneth Levin summed up what occurred as follows:

²⁴ “Introduction to the 1924 Anglo American Convention on the Mandate for Palestine,” with copy of the Anglo-American Convention, Israel Legal Foundation, at <http://www.israellegalfoundation.com/anglo-american.html>

²⁵ U.S. Constitution, Article VI.

²⁶ “Franco-British Agreement on Northern Border,” a/k/a “Newcombe-Paulet Agreement,” a/k/a “Agreement Between His Majesty’s Government and the French Government respecting the Boundary Line Between Syria and Palestine from the Mediterranean to El Hamme,” March 7, 1923, English and French, with maps, British treaty archive, at <http://treaties.fco.gov.uk/docs/pdf/1923/TS0013.pdf> El Hamme, or Al Hamma, is apparently now the site of Israel’s Hamat Gader park in the Golan. See <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hamat-gader-hot-springs>

“In 1923, Britain also detached the Golan Heights from the Mandate and ceded it to the French Mandate in Syria in exchange primarily for French concessions regarding Iraq. Extensive Jewish landholdings on the Golan, much of them purchased by the Rothschilds to establish Jewish agricultural communities, were subsequently nationalized by Syria after the country won its independence from France in 1946.”²⁷

U.S. recognition of Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan would thus implement a treaty obligation that has been the law of the land in the United States for 93 years, and help rectify Britain’s 95-year-old wrong.

Moreover, as I testified before this Committee last November with respect to the U.S. embassy relocation to Jerusalem,²⁸ UN Security Council Resolution 242, adopted after the 1967 Six Day War, in fact, first and foremost, called for Israel to have “*recognized and secure*” borders.²⁹ The recognized and secure borders that Israel is entitled to must necessarily include the Golan Heights, which is so vital to Israel’s ability to defend herself.

Further, UN Security Council Resolution 242 specifically did **not** call for Israel to surrender “all” lands captured in 1967.³⁰ The British Ambassador who drafted the approved resolution, Lord Caradon, explained that “*It would have been wrong to demand that Israel return to its positions of June 4, 1967, because those positions were undesirable and artificial.*” Similarly, U.S. Ambassador Arthur Goldberg explained that UNSC Resolution 242 deliberately did not require Israel to withdraw from “all” territories Israel captured in 1967.

And then-U.S. President Lyndon Johnson stated shortly after UNSC Resolution 242’s adoption:

*“We are not the ones to say where other nations should draw lines between them that will assure each the greatest security. It is clear, however, that a return to the situation of June 4, 1967, will not bring peace.”*³¹

Israel has arguably also more than complied with any “return” obligations in UNSC Resolution 242 by returning to Egypt the Sinai – the largest area captured by Israel in 1967 – pursuant to the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty. In addition, pursuant to the Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement of May 31, 1974, Israel ceded to Syria significant areas that Israel had

²⁷ “*The Oslo Syndrome: Delusions of a People Under Siege*,” by Dr. Kenneth Levin, Smith & Kraus, Inc., 2005 ed., Ch. 5, page 97. See also “*The Golan Heights: History and Biblical Significance*,” by Victor Sharpe, *Israel Nat’l News*, Oct. 13, 2012, at <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/12300>

²⁸ Written Testimony of Zionist Organization of America Pres. Morton A. Klein, Hearing on Moving the American Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, Before the H. Rep. Comm. on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security, Nov. 8, 2017, at https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Klein_Testimony_11082017.pdf

²⁹ UN Security Council Resolution 242, Nov. 22, 1967, at <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/UN%20Security%20Council%20Resolution%20242.aspx>

³⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 242, Nov. 22, 1967, *supra*.

³¹ “*Lyndon Johnson Administration: Speech on ‘A Just and Dignified Peace’*,” Sept. 10, 1968, Jewish Virtual Library, at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/president-johnson-speech-on-a-just-and-dignified-peace-rdquo-september-1968>

captured in 1967, as well as all the additional areas Israel captured while defending herself in the 1973 Yom Kippur war.³²

In sum, Israel has the strongest legal and historical right to the Israeli Golan Heights.

C. Syrian Warfare From the Golan Against the Jewish State, 1948-1973:

In the 1948-1949 war against Israel, six Arab nations attacked the newly reestablished Jewish State. Syria conquered the strip of land at the edge of the Golan abutting the Galilee/Lake Kinneret – an area that was not included within Syria, even in the 1923 lines agreed to by France and Britain, which had already cut the Golan Heights off from the area that Britain was obligated to hold in trust for the Jewish State.

From 1948-1967, the topography of the Golan Heights enabled Syria to incessantly shell Israeli towns and farms below, and enabled Fatah fedayeen attacks from the Golan. The below map³³ shows the topography that enabled these incessant attacks on northern Israel.



³² Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement-1974, May 31, 1974, at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/israel-syria%20separation%20of%20forces%20agreement%20-%201974.aspx>; and “The Arab-Israel Conflict - Disengagement-of-Forces Agreement between Syria and Israel - Successful Conclusion of Dr. Kissinger's Middle East Peace Mission,” Keesing's Record of World Events, Vol. 20, June 1974, p. 26565, at <http://web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/3380-1974-06-KS-a-IEM.pdf>

³³ “The Golan Heights Prior to the 1967 War,” Jewish Virtual Library (from Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs), at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/map-of-the-golan-heights-prior-to-the-1967-war>

In 1964, Syria also attempted to divert the streams from the Golan that fed into the Galilee/Lake Kinneret – Israel’s major water supply.

Israel’s miraculous victory in 1967 ended the incessant attacks on northern Israel from the Golan. Israel’s presence on the Golan Heights also enabled Israel to drive back Syria’s initially successful onslaught during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. After the Yom Kippur War, Israel and Syria agreed to the Israel-Syria Separation of Forces agreement.

“The general effect of the [Israel-Syria Separation of Forces] agreement was that Israel would withdraw from all the areas taken in the October 1973 war, as well as from some areas occupied in the 1967 war, including the . . . town of Quneitra (Kuneitra), the chief centre of the Golan region.”³⁴

Understandably, Israel’s Likud party strongly criticized the agreement as a sell-out of Israel’s security, and as giving Syria “*a prize for her aggression in October.*” Fortunately, Israel retained the Golan to the eastern ridge.

D. In Light of Syria’s Continuous Rejection of Peace, There Is No Reason To Wait Longer to Recognize Israel’s Sovereignty Over the Golan:

Israel and America have already waited and attempted, for over half a century, for Syria to make peace, to no avail. It makes no sense to withhold recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan for still more years, in deference to the pipe dream of a future Israeli-Syrian “peace deal” – which has no prospect of being achieved or abided by. Syria has continued to reject peace with Israel, ever since Israel’s reestablishment seventy years ago – even after waging full-scale war on the Jewish State three times and losing. For instance:

- Despite the fact that the Israeli-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement returned to Syria all the lands that Syria lost in its aggressive 1973 Yom Kippur War plus some of the lands Syria lost in the 1967 Six Day War, and accordingly should have constituted a final peace agreement, the 1974 Israeli-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement states “*This agreement is not a peace agreement.*”³⁵
- In 1981, the day before the Knesset passed the Golan Heights annexation law, the Syrian regime announced it would prefer to fight Israel for 100 years, rather than live at peace with it.³⁶ Jerusalem Post senior editor Caroline Glick explained that the Assad regime made

³⁴ “*The Arab-Israel Conflict - Disengagement-of-Forces Agreement between Syria and Israel - Successful Conclusion of Dr. Kissinger's Middle East Peace Mission,*” Keesing’s Record of World Events, Vol. 20, June 1974, p. 26565, at <http://web.stanford.edu/group/tomzgroup/pmwiki/uploads/3380-1974-06-KS-a-IEM.pdf>

³⁵ Israel-Syria Separation of Forces Agreement-1974, May 31, 1974, para. 8, at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/israel-syria%20separation%20of%20forces%20agreement%20-%201974.aspx>

³⁶ “*A Trumpian Israeli Initiative,*” by Caroline Glick, 12/16/2016, at <http://carolineglick.com/a-trumpian-israeli-initiative/>

hundreds of similar statements since 1967, *“reinforcing, yet again, the basic truth that Israel would be responsible for the Golan Heights for a long, long time.”*

- Syria has not even engaged in negotiations for the past eight years. Meanwhile, the prospects for peace have deteriorated to the non-existent level, given the presence of Iran and the swarm of terrorist groups in Syria. And the situation continues to worsen.
- Syria repeatedly rejected past peace overtures from several previous Israeli governments. Syria even rejected an extraordinarily generous, extremely foolhardy, suicidal-to-Israel offer from then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak in 1999-2000 – an offer that was antithetical to the views of Israel’s security professionals, as well as 90% of Israelis, who recalled Syria’s attacks from the Golan Heights, and thus sensibly opposed ceding the Golan to Syria. Dr. Kenneth Levin’s book provides a fascinating account of what occurred – which is worthwhile reprinting here:

“With regard to Syria, [Prime Minister Ehud] **Barak** essentially followed the path of his three predecessors, soon making clear that he **was prepared to return the entire Golan to Syrian sovereignty in exchange for “peace.”** He apparently did so, again like his predecessors, with full expectation that Assad would ultimately accept Israel’s offer. Once more the Israeli leadership refused to recognize that Arab adversaries might weigh the prospect of peace differently from how Israel would want them to weigh it.

(To questions about how Israel would defend itself against a subsequent surprise Syrian assault if Syria did accept return of the Golan in exchange for a peace agreement, Barak either focused on peace also benefitting Syria, precluding such a threat – a claim in line with Peace Movement rhetoric – or spoke of Israel offsetting the loss of territory through early warning technology. The latter argument represented a grossly unrealistic expectation **according to most strategic and intelligence experts**. In their view, **no technology could compensate for the strategic losses entailed in ceding the Golan, and Israel would inexorably be left dangerously vulnerable.**)

In December 1999, Barak began American-mediated negotiations with Syrian foreign minister Farouk al-Shara in Washington. The talks ended without a breakthrough, but over the following weeks Israel continued to pursue a Syrian agreement. The major territorial point of contention, according to news leaks, was whether Israel, in descending from the entire Golan, would withdraw only to the international border [the lines established by the 1923 agreement between France and Britain], or, as Syria demanded, also leave those areas along the Sea of Galilee that Syria had seized [when Syria attacked Israel in 1948-1949] prior to the 1967 war, that Israel had retaken [in 1967].

Even many supporters of Oslo and of return of the Golan to Syria balked at Assad’s demand for more. They did so in part for pragmatic reasons, in particular because the additional territory potentially to be ceded, by extending Syrian control to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, would present critical difficulties such as compromising this key

source of Israel's water supply. But there were also issues of principle. **The Arabs were demanding the return of all territory taken by force of arms and yet they were in this instance insisting that Syria be given territory it had taken by force of arms prior to the 1967 war. Nevertheless Barak, with the support of most of his government, indicated a readiness for additional concessions.**

Still the Syrians would not budge, even refusing to resume direct negotiations. In February 2000, President Clinton met with Syrian President Assad in Geneva to test Assad's intention and effect what he anticipated would be a major breakthrough. In that event, Assad indicated that he was unprepared for a full peace with Israel, no matter how forthcoming Barak was on ceding territory. Only in the wake of this denouement in Geneva did Barak and the Clinton Administration begin to awaken to the fact that Assad did not regard peace with Israel as worth the domestic risks it would entail, however much land on and beyond the Golan peace would bring him.

Barak's courting of Assad over the preceding months, like the steps towards Syria taken by his recent predecessors, had involved the sacrifice of both principle and pragmatism to deluded policy. . . .

During these same months, **Syria's state-controlled media** ran several stories with anti-Semitic themes. One such, in late November, **regurgitated the blood libel**, the claim that Jews use the blood of gentiles for their religious rituals, which was also the theme of a popular book by Syria's defense minister Mustafa Tlas (*The Matzah of Zion*, 1984). An editorial in later January in Syria's leading newspaper, *Tishreen*, a mouthpiece for the Assad regime, focused on denial of the Holocaust while insisting that Israeli policies are worse than those of the Nazis.

. . . . Yet Barak remained silent on the Syrian libels. His most notable comments regarding the Syrian government during this period was his characterization of Assad as "a courageous leader." (Nov. 9, 1999).

As one Israeli columnist . . . observed: "Barak is afraid of reminding the Israeli public about the nature of the regime to which he proposes yielding the strategic Golan Heights in exchange for a peace likely to be as trustworthy as *Tishreen's* sense of history.

The writer goes on to suggest that to be silent with regard to Syrian anti-Semitism for the sake of a deal to surrender the Golan just makes Israel's Syrian gambit all the more untethered from rational policy."³⁷

In sum, it makes no sense to wait longer to recognize Israeli sovereignty.

E. Syria and Armed Groups, Including Those Backed By Iran, Have Unlawfully Breached the Disengagement Zone and Moved Closer to the Israeli Border, Requiring Israeli Presence In and Monitoring From the Golan Heights:

³⁷ "The Oslo Syndrome: Delusions of a People Under Siege," by Dr. Kenneth Levin, Smith & Kraus, Inc., 2005 ed., Ch. 16, pp. 415-417.

Syrian forces and various armed terrorist groups, including groups supported by Iran, have moved closer to Israel's border, and into the Disengagement Zone between Israel and Syria, thereby violating the 1974 Separation of Forces Agreement. A particularly flagrant violation by Syria occurred just a few weeks ago: Syria moved into an abandoned UNDOF post in the disengagement zone. UN observers are not even safe in Syrian and disengagement zone areas. These developments endanger the longstanding Israeli-Syrian ceasefire, and jeopardize the stability of the entire region.

This situation also underscores the need to support Israel's continuing retention of the ability, afforded by the Golan Heights, to engage in sophisticated monitoring and counter the severe dangers at the Syrian-Israeli border.

(1) **June 24, 2018 Report that Syrian Forces Illegally Took Over UNDOF Post in Disengagement Zone, Near Israel:** A few hours after a Syrian drone launch towards Israel (see Part F below), the IDF reported that Syria has taken over an abandoned United Nations Disengagement Observers' Forces post near the Israeli border. The IDF noted that the Syrian takeover of the post constitutes a "*serious and flagrant violation of the separation-of-forces agreement*" entered into by Israel and Syria in 1974.³⁸

(2) **UNDOF's Own Reports Express Grave Concerns About Violations:** The most recent UNDOF report to the UN Security Council (for the Feb. 23 to May 23, 2018 quarter)³⁹ describes various armed groups' unlawful activity in the disengagement zone between Israel and Syria, as follows:

"The Syrian armed Forces and non-State armed opposition groups engaged in exchanges of heavy weapons fire in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. Various armed groups, **including the listed terrorist groups Jabhat Fath al-Sham (formerly the Nusra Front) and the Khalid Ibn al-Walid Army, which pledged allegiance to Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), continued to exchange fire in the UNDOF area of operations.**

As underscored again by the Security Council in its resolution 2394 (2017), **there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation.**"⁴⁰

The UNDOF report also expressed "grave concern" that the fighting on the Syrian side of the disengagement zone, between Syrian forces and armed groups, and among armed groups including listed terrorist groups, "**jeopardize[s] the long-term ceasefire between Israel and**

³⁸ "Syrian Military Takes Over Abandoned UN Post Near Israeli Border," Algemeiner/JNS, June 25, 2018, at <https://www.algemeiner.com/2018/06/25/syrian-military-takes-over-abandoned-un-post-near-israeli-border/>

³⁹ "June 2018 Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 23 February to 23 May 2018," at https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7b65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7d/s_2018_550.pdf

⁴⁰ *Id.*, para. 2.

the Syrian Arab Republic,” endangers UNDOF operations and personnel, and is **impacting “the stability of the wider region.”**⁴¹

UNDOF also renewed its “*call on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to fulfil its primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the Bravo side,*”⁴² and demanded removal of “all military equipment and armed personnel from the area of separation.”⁴³ The UNDOF report further noted that these situations “**require continued vigilance and risk mitigation measures.**”⁴⁴

In addition, another UN Security Council report, a running “Chronology of Events” on the Golan Heights (Israel/Syria)⁴⁵ describes kidnappings and other assaults on UNDOF personnel in or near the disengagement zone, by armed terrorist groups, which required UNDOF personnel to move to the Israeli side of UNDOF’s area of operations. For instance, the September 2014 chronology entry reported:

“[O]n 27 August, . . . armed opposition forces overran government forces at the Quneitra crossing on the Syrian side of the armistice line. The next day, **Al-Nusra Front detained 45 Fijian peacekeepers and besieged 72 Filipino peacekeepers.** In response to the incidents, Council members released three press statements . . . The Filipino peacekeepers quickly escaped, while the Fijian peacekeepers were held for two weeks only to be released on 11 September. On 17 September, Council members were briefed . . . on the relocation of UNDOF personnel and equipment to the Alpha (Israeli) side of the mission’s area of operations. On 19 September, the Council adopted a presidential statement requesting the Secretary-General to update the Council within 30 days on the steps necessary to maintain UNDOF’s ability to carry out its mandate while adjusting the mission’s posture to minimise risk to personnel.”⁴⁶

The August 2014 UN chronology entry condemned “*continuing attacks on UNDOF positions, the detention of 44 Fijian peacekeepers by armed opposition groups and 40 Filipino peacekeepers surrounded by armed opposition groups.*”⁴⁷

The March 2013 UN chronology entry reported “the detention of 21 UNDOF peacekeepers by armed Syrian opposition fighters,” and the UNDOF peacekeepers’ eventual release into Jordan.⁴⁸

F. Recent Iranian-Syrian-Hezbollah Launches of Rockets and UAVs Into Israel From Syria, Require Enhanced Israeli Monitoring and Countermeasures From the Golan Heights:

⁴¹ *Id.*, para. 37.

⁴² *Id.*, para. 41.

⁴³ *Id.*, para. 38.

⁴⁴ *Id.*, para. 41.

⁴⁵ “Security Council Report, *Chronology of Events: Golan Heights (Israel/Syria)*” revised on 13 July 2018, at <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/golan-heights-israelsyria.php?page=3>

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.*

Drone and rocket launches by Iranian Quds Forces, Iranian proxy Hezbollah, and Syria, from Syrian territory into Israel – just last week and in recent years – also demonstrate the acute need for sophisticated Israeli monitoring and counter-measures along the Syrian-Israeli frontier, made possible by Israel’s retention of the Golan. These incidents also underscore the need to support Israel’s sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

Here is an partial list of alarming recent launches from Syria into Israel:

July 11, 2018 - Syrian UAV Flies 6 miles into Israel: Last week, a Syrian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was launched from Syria, and crossed six miles (10 kilometers) into northern Israel before the Israel Defense Forces intercepted the UAV with a Patriot missile, above the Sea of Galilee. The Israeli police had to order boats and swimmers to shore from this popular summer recreation area. Debris from the UAV landed in the lake following the intercept.⁴⁹ .

The IDF provided the following illustration⁵⁰ showing where the Syrian UAV was intercepted above Israel:



June 24, 2018 - Syria launched drone towards Israel: On June 24, 2018. Syria launched a drone towards the Israeli portion of the Golan Heights. The IDF fired a Patriot missile at the drone, which then turned back from the Israeli border.⁵¹

⁴⁹ “Patriot Missile Launched Against Syrian Drone: The unarmed reconnaissance drone flew 10 km inside Israel before being intercepted,” by Anna Ahronheim, July 11, 2018
<https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/IDF-Spokesperson-Patriot-missile-launched-against-Syrian-drone-562226>

⁵⁰ “Syrian UAV Intercepted in Northern Israel,” IDF Defense & Security News, July 11, 2018, at
<https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/defense-and-security/syrian-uav-intercepted-in-northern-israel/>

May 9, 2018 - Iranian Quds Force launched 20 rockets into Israeli Golan: On Wednesday May 9, 2018, the Iranian Quds Force launched 20 rockets from Syria into the Israeli Golan Heights. The Israeli Air Force responded by striking military targets in Syria that belonged to Iran's Quds force. The IDF reported:

“Iran is actively conducting its military activities beyond its borders, which not only is a threat to Israel, but to the Middle East as a whole. On Wednesday, May 9, 2018, the Quds force, a special force wing of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, stationed in Syria, shot 20 rockets towards IDF posts in the Golan Heights. The IDF intercepted four of the rockets, preventing casualties and damage. This is the first time that Iranian forces have directly fired at Israeli troops. In response, IDF fighter jets struck dozens of military targets in Syria that belonged to Iran's Quds force. The IDF's wide-scale attack included Iranian intelligence sites, the Quds force logistics headquarters, an Iranian military compound in Syria, observation and military posts, et cetera. In spite of a warning from Israel, Syrian aerial defense forces fired towards the IAF aircraft as they conducted the strikes. In response, the IAF targeted several aerial interception systems (SA5, SA2, SA22, SA17) which belong to the Syrian Armed Forces. All of the IDF's fighter jets returned to their bases safely.

This is the second time this year that Iran has used its military facilities in Syria to attack Israel. In [February 2018](#), the Quds force launched a UAV from Syria, which violated Israeli airspace and threatened Israeli security.

Iran's aggression is further proof of the Iranian regime's intentions and the threat it poses to Israel and regional stability. **Iran continues to use Syria as its personal military outpost from which it can attack the State of Israel and its civilians, while the Syrian regime allows it to happen.”**⁵²

The May 9, 2018 Iranian attack on Israel, and Israeli counterattack against Iranian targets in Syria, prompted the U.S., Germany and even Bahrain to issue statements affirming Israel's right to defend herself from Iranian aggression.⁵³ Bahrain's Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa tweeted that so long as Iran uses its forces and missiles to try and destabilize the region, ***“it is the right of any country in the region, including Israel, to defend itself by destroying sources of danger.”***⁵⁴

⁵¹ “Israel Fires Missile at Syrian Drone Approaching Border,” JNS/Israel Hayom, June 24, 2018, at <https://www.jns.org/israel-fires-missile-at-syrian-drone-approaching-%E2%80%8Eborder-%E2%80%8E/>

⁵² “IDF Strikes Iranian Targets in Syria,” IDF Defense & Security News, May 10, 2018, at <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/terror-and-threats/idf-strikes-iranian-targets-in-syria/>

⁵³ See, e.g., “Iranian Strike On IDF 'Bolsters Decision' To Exit Nuclear Deal, U.S. Says,” by Michael Wilner, Daniel J. Roth, *Jerusalem Post*, May 10, 2018, at <https://www.jpost.com/American-Politics/Iran-strike-on-Israel-bolsters-decision-to-exit-nuclear-deal-US-says-556019>

⁵⁴ See @khalidalkhalifa – May 10, 2018 tweet, at <https://twitter.com/hassanabdalnabi/status/994542859457122304> ; and “Bahrain: Israel Has ‘Right’ to Respond to Iran,” YNet News (with AP & Reuters), May 10, 2018, at <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5256666,00.html>; and “ZOA Praises Arab/Muslim Bahrain for Supporting Israel's Right to Defend Itself,” May 17, 2018, at

The Bahraini Foreign Minister's statement also signals that America's moderate Sunni Arab allies may very well quietly welcome U.S. recognition that enhances Israel's ability to counter Iran's malign, aggressive activities.

February 10, 2018 - Iran Ouds Force launched UAV into Israeli airspace from Syria:

On Saturday, February 10, 2018, at 4:25 a.m., Iran launched a UAV from Syria, which violated Israeli sovereign airspace. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) dispatched an Apache attack helicopter to intercept the UAV, and destroyed it.⁵⁵

In addition, Israeli Air Force (IAF) aircraft targeted the control vehicle from which the UAV was operated, at a Syrian airbase. During this attack, Syria launched multiple surface-to-air missiles at the IAF aircraft, and hit an IAF F-16I fighter jet. The two Israeli pilots were forced to eject and parachuted to safety in Israeli territory (although both suffered injuries). Israel also carried out a successful attack on Syrian aerial defenses system in Syria, including *"Iranian targets that were part of Iran's military establishment in Syria."*⁵⁶

The head of Israel's Northern Command stated: *"What we've known for a long time is now clear to everyone: Iran wants to establish a front in Syria that is aimed at harming Israel."*⁵⁷

November 11, 2017 – Syria UAV crossed Syrian border into Demilitarized Zone on

Israel's Border: On Saturday November 11, 2017, a Syrian UAV crossed the Syrian border, and was intercepted by an Israeli Patriot missile in the disengagement (demilitarized) zone, on the Israeli border.⁵⁸

September 19, 2017 – Hezbollah launched Iranian-built drone from Syria: On

September 19, 2017, the Hezbollah terrorist organization launched an Iranian-built drone from Syria, in an attempt to cross into Israeli airspace. The Israeli Air Force shot down the drone with a Patriot missile after the drone crossed over the Syrian border into the disengagement zone between Syria and Israel.⁵⁹

April 27, 2017 – Syrian UAV penetrated Israeli airspace: On April 24, 2017, a Syrian drone entered Israeli airspace, and was downed by an Israeli missile.⁶⁰

<https://zoa.org/2018/05/10378041-zoa-praises-arab-muslim-bahrain-for-supporting-israels-right-to-defend-itself/>

⁵⁵ "Air Force Strikes Iranian Targets in Syria," IDF Defense & Security News, Feb. 11, 2018, at <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/israeli-air-force/air-force-strikes-iranian-targets-in-syria/>

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ "Patriot Missile Intercepts Drone On Israel's Border With Syria," by Anna Ahronheim, *Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 11, 2017, at <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Patriot-missile-intercepts-drone-on-Israel's-border-with-Syria-513968>

⁵⁹ "IDF Patriot Intercepts Apparent Hezbollah Drone From Syria," by Judah Ari Gross, *Times of Israel*, Sept. 19, 2017, at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ids-patriot-intercepts-apparent-hezbollah-drone-from-syria/>

⁶⁰ "Israeli Missile Downs Syrian Drone Over Golan Heights," by Judah Ari Gross, *Times of Israel*, April 27, 2017, at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/patriot-missile-intercepts-drone-over-golan-heights/>

August 2015 – Iranian proxy, Palestinian Islamic Jihad fired rockets from Syria into northern Israeli village: In August 2015, another Iran proxy terrorist group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, fired rockets from Syria into an Israeli village in the upper Galilee region. Israel responded by firing missiles at a building in Syria's portion of the Golan Heights.⁶¹

September 23, 2014 – Syrian fighter jet penetrated Israeli airspace: On September 23, 2014, a Syrian Air Force Sukhoi Su-24 penetrated into Israeli airspace over the Golan. Israel's air command promptly shot down the Syrian fighter jet, using a Patriot missile.⁶² The Syrian pilots safely ejected from the plane into Syria. The Sukhoi Su-24 is a Russian-designed supersonic attack aircraft, also used by Syria in its civil war.⁶³

August 31, 2014 – Syrian UAV penetrated Israeli airspace: On August 31, 2014, a Syrian drone crossed the border into the Israeli Golan near Quneitra, and was destroyed by an Israeli Patriot surface-to-air missile.⁶⁴

G. Israel's Golan Heights is the Site of Extraordinary Israeli Humanitarian Medical Assistance to Syrian Civil War Victims

For close to five years now, the IDF has been helping injured Syrians who come to Israel's northern border. Two years ago, Israel launched "Operation Good Neighbor," which provides Syrians in need with medical, infrastructural, and civilian aid, at Israel's "Mazor Ladach" (translation: "Bandaging Those in Need") field hospital, located in the southern Golan Heights. The field hospital has treated hundreds of injured Syrians. In addition to providing medical care, Israel provides its Syrian visitors to Mazor Ladach with aid kits to take home that include food, basic hygiene products, and medicine. Visitors also receive hot meals and playroom time for their children during their stay at Mazor Ladach.⁶⁵

Israel's humanitarian care for injured Syrians starkly contrasts with Syria's chemical warfare and other brutal treatment of its own citizens.

Thus, maintaining the Golan as a center for humane relief is, in itself, reason enough to recognize Israeli sovereignty.

H. It Is Impossible to Defend Israel Without the Golan Heights:

⁶¹ "Israel Fires Missiles Into Syria After Rocket Attack," BBC News, Aug. 20, 2015, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34009296>

⁶² "IDF Shoots Down Syrian Fighter Plane Over Golan," by Spencer Ho and Ilan Ben Zion, *Times of Israel*, Sept. 23, 2014, at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-shoots-down-syrian-fighter-plane-over-golan/>

⁶³ Sukhoi Su-24, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukhoi_Su-24

⁶⁴ "Israel's Military Says Patriot Missile Shot Down Drone From Syria," by Batsheva Sobelman, *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 31, 2014, at <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-israelis-down-drone-20140831-story.html>

⁶⁵ "A Look Inside the 'Mazor Ladach' Field Hospital in the Golan Heights," Nov. 20, 2017, at <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/operation-good-neighbor/a-look-inside-the-mazor-ladach-field-hospital-in-the-golan-heights/>

The simple truth is that if it gives up the Golan Heights, Israel cannot remain secure, and the entire region will be destabilized.

Without the Golan Heights' strategically-located high ground, Israeli communities in all the plains and valleys below would suffer incessant rocket attacks, even worse than the horrors these communities were subjected to in 1949-1967, given the far more sophisticated and deadly weaponry that Syria, Iran and terrorist groups operating in Syria have at their disposal today. Israel would lose irreplaceable abilities to monitor and take counter-measures against growing threats at and near the Syrian-Israel border, from Iran, Syrian forces, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Quds forces; thousands of Iranian-armed Hezbollah fighters; Palestinian Islamic Jihad; and radical Sunni Islamist groups including al Nusra and ISIS.

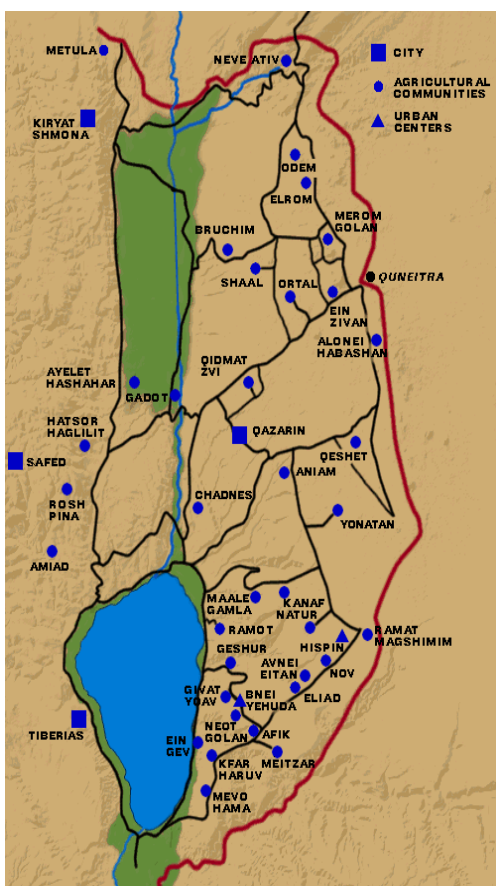
Israel cannot expect to replicate her miraculous, hard-won victory in the 1967 Six Day War, from pre-1967 lines today. That victory was in large part made possible by Syria's far less sophisticated weaponry and undeveloped infrastructure at that time; and Israel's unique heroic spy Eli Cohen's ability to infiltrate the highest echelons of Syria's ruling regime, recall and report to Israel the location of every weapon pointed at Israel, and persuade the Syrians to mark its fortifications with shade trees that also gave away Syria's positions, before the Syrians captured and executed him.⁶⁶ Today, the Golan Heights' early warning systems are Israel's equivalent of an Eli Cohen. Israel moreover did not have Iranian, Hezbollah, al Nusrah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and ISIS on its Syrian border in 1967.

Nor can Israel expect to replicate her success at driving back Syria's initially successful surprise attack in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, if Israel gives up the Golan high ground and depth that made Israel's eventual victory in 1973 possible.

Without the Golan, Israel would also lose the 20,000 Druze citizens living in the Golan. Druze soldiers who fight in the IDF and are familiar with its capabilities, would now live under Syrian rule and switch their loyalties to Syria.

Israel would also have a humanitarian crisis to deal with, resulting from the displacement of Israel's substantial Jewish communities in the Golan. Golan Heights communities are shown on the below map. (Source: Jewish Virtual Library).

⁶⁶ "Eli Cohen (1924 -1965)," Jewish Virtual Library, at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/eli-cohen>



Israelis are overwhelmingly opposed to ceding the Golan – even for a purported peace agreement with Syria.

It is rationally unthinkable that Israel would return to a situation that robs her of the high ground that gives her the ability to defend herself.

In 2009, the former chair of Israel's National Security Council (2004-2006) and head of the IDF's Operations Branch and Planning Directorate, Major-General (res.) Giora Eiland, wrote a brilliant 30-page report entitled "*Defensible Borders on the Golan Heights*,"⁶⁷ which thoroughly demonstrated that Israel cannot remain secure if Israel gives up the Golan Heights. General Eiland's report also demonstrated that there are no possible security arrangements that can compensate for Israel's loss of the Golan Heights.

General Eiland's analysis is even more cogent today, given today's additional multiple threats from Iran and an array of terrorist groups on the Syrian border. 2009 was prior to Iran's and various terror groups' entrenchment in Syria, launches of anti-Israel operations from Syria, and encroachments into the Disengagement Zone. Incidentally, General Eiland's report was

⁶⁷ "*Defensible Borders on the Golan Heights*," by Maj.-Gen. Giora Eiland, JCPA, 2009, at <http://www.jcpa.org/text/DefensibleBorders-GolanHeights.pdf>. At the IDF's Operations Branch and its Planning Directorate, General Eiland was responsible for designing and implementing the IDF's operational and strategic policies. Also see "*Expert's Report: Israel Cannot Leave Golan*," by Hillel Fendel, *Israel Nat'l News*, Apr. 10, 2009 (article on General Eiland's report) at <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/130830>.

published by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA), the prestigious research organization headed by my co-panelist today, Ambassador Dore Gold.

Below is a very brief summary of some of the key factors described by General Eiland, as to why Israel's retention of the Golan is essential:

(1) **Strategic Depth:** Although the 8- to 16-mile depth of the Israeli Golan Heights is still relatively narrow, this strip of land provides Israel with the strategic depth essential for Israel's quantitatively inferior standing army to forestall an initial Syrian attack and mobilize Israeli reserves to drive back a Syrian incursion. If Syria is able to start an attack from the pre-1967 lines, Syria can overrun Israel's heartland.

In the Yom Kippur War (1973), the Golan's strategic depth saved Israel from annihilation. Syria initially conquered Mt. Hermon and breached other parts of Israel's Golan defense line. Israel counterattacked and re-conquered the area initially captured by Syria and additional Syrian territory (the Syrian Enclave). In the 1974 Armistice Agreement, Israel returned the Syrian enclave under U.S. pressure, but resisted then U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger's pressure to withdraw from the critical eastern ridge line in the Golan.

(2) **Early Warning Stations:** Under "peace" proposals, Israel would lose 4 of Israel's 5 strategically placed early warning stations in the Golan (2 large stations on Mt. Hermon and 3 along the length of the Golan Heights). The one remaining restricted station on Mt. Hermon would be insufficient to monitor all Syrian troop movements and threats [much less the threats from other sworn enemies operating in Syria].

(3) **Elevated Vantage Point:** The current armistice lines provide topographical advantages that are critical and optimal for Israeli defense. They provide Israel with fire and observation control many miles into Syria and protect the bulk of Israeli territory from Syrian surveillance and ground fire. For example, Mt. Avital, under IDF control, is 1,204 meters above sea level, while the opposite area in Syria is 700-800 meters above sea level. There is a steep 500 meter (1,700 feet) drop from the Golan to the Jordan River Valley and Sea of Galilee below, which would make northern Israel difficult to protect if Syria controls the Golan.

(4) **Dangerous Weaponry Developments:** In 2009, Syria had already amassed: (1) ground infantry weaponry, including anti-aircraft and anti-tank weaponry with advantages which outpaced tank capabilities; (2) chemical weapons which can be launched via missile or other means; and (3) huge quantities of surface-to-surface missiles capable of reaching any target in Israel, with superior concealment capabilities. In the event of a Syrian attack, Israel must achieve rapid victory, including destroying substantial parts of Syria's forces and achieving a ground threat to Damascus, to stop Syria's use of missile and/or chemical weapons on Israel. [These dangerous weaponry developments are even further advanced today.]

(5) **Syrian Compliance With Demilitarization of the Golan Cannot Be Guaranteed Or Verified:** Syrian missiles can be concealed throughout the Golan.

(6) **Proposals Intended to Compensate Israel for Loss of the Golan are Unworkable and Based on Faulty Assumptions:** The purported "solutions" proposed during the 1999-2000 negotiations to compensate Israel for loss of the Golan were, according to General

Eiland “*implausible at the time, but changing circumstances, both strategic and operative, have rendered Israel’s forfeiture of the Golan today an even more reckless act.*” Israel cannot defend itself from a Syrian attack by beginning from the Hula Valley, below the Golan, but rather at the line where it is presently stationed – in the Golan Heights. The 1999 proposal for Israeli withdrawal was supposed to “*creat[e] a situation that would guarantee that in case of war, IDF forces could return to the place where they are currently stationed.*” Under this proposal, “*as soon as the IDF would comprehend that Syria intended to go to war, or the moment that the movement of Syrian forces westward was identified, IDF forces could move rapidly eastward onto the demilitarized Golan Heights.*” This proposal absurdly assumed that IDF forces (which would be stationed in the Hula Valley, south of the Sea of Galilee), would reach Israel’s present optimal defensive line before the Syrians arrived.

General Eiland explained that the 1999 “security” proposal was based on the following five false assumptions, which were of even more flawed in 2009 due to Syrian weapons developments as of 2009. [These assumptions are even more flawed today.] Briefly, these false assumptions, and the reasons why they were flawed, and why the entire security proposal could not replace Israel’s retention of the Golan Heights, were:

- (1) “When war erupts, both sides will be located where they are obligated to be.” This is impossible to verify. Syrian “policemen” and “civilians” can be expected to operate thousands of highly effective anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles and small rockets that will be stored in Golan cities, impeding Israeli forces.
- (2) “The warning will be timely.” In fact, without the Golan, Israel will have inadequate early warning capability.
- (3) “Israel will correctly interpret Syrian violations.” In fact, violations can be masked. For example, Syria could send troops ready to invade Israel, under the guise of quelling civilian riots. Israel moreover can make, and has previously made extremely costly mistakes regarding enemies’ intentions. For instance, prior to the Yom Kippur War, Israeli intelligence thought that the growing Egyptian military concentration in the Suez Canal was only a military exercise.
- (4) “Israel will react quickly to violations by declaring war and entering Syrian territory.” In fact, Israel has often been hesitant to act, as evidenced by its years’ long delays in reacting to rocket attacks from Gaza.
- (5) “The IDF will be able to outrace the Syrian force.” In fact, the Golan will likely be filled with new Syrian cities around the principal transportation arteries, and other anti-tank obstacles, impeding Israel from reaching its current lines quickly.

In addition, the peace discussions made no attempt to reduce the major Syrian threats posed by Syria’s ground-to-ground missiles and large quantities of chemical weapons.

(7) **Assad’s Regime Is Unstable:** General Eiland correctly noted that the Assad regime is unstable – a factor which has since been borne out by Syria’s civil war. General Eiland noted that Bashar Assad’s Alawite regime represents only 14% of the Syrian population. The 80% Sunni majority views the Alawite rule as illegitimate, repressive and anti-Islamic. A Sunni revolt could result in a regime that does not honor obligations to Israel. A Syrian-Israeli

peace treaty could even make a revolt more likely, because Assad justified emergency security laws as necessary due to the Israeli enemy. Without these emergency measures, revolution may be more feasible.

(8) An Israeli-Syrian Peace Agreement will NOT Have Wider Advantages:

General Eiland also debunked the idea that an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement would have any wider advantages. He noted:

1. Even if an Israeli-Syrian peace agreement drives a wedge between Syria and Iran (which is unlikely), this will not lessen the threat to Israel of an Iranian nuclear attack. Iran does not need Syria to carry out its threats. Moreover, Iran favors an Israeli-Syrian agreement, because such an agreement removes territory from Israeli control, and weakens Israel's defensive capabilities.
2. The Syrian-Hizbullah relationship will remain close even if a Syrian-Israeli agreement is reached. Syria will reinforce Hizbullah in order to safeguard Syria's interests in Lebanon. [In addition, more recently, Syria relied on Hezbollah fighters to assist Syria in its civil war against ISIS and other Sunni groups.]
3. The flow of weapons from Iran through Syria will continue over the porous hundreds of kilometers long Syrian-Lebanon border. Iran also has other routes for supplying Hizbullah. [In fact, Israel's retention of the Golan enables Israel to stem the flow of Iranian weapons to Hezbollah.]
4. A peace agreement with Syria will not assist Israel in achieving peace with the Palestinian-Arabs. It will be more difficult for Israel to manage agreements on both fronts. Palestinians are likely to start a third intifada.
5. A Syrian-Israeli agreement will not improve Israel's relations with the rest of the Arab world. Israel's peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan did not enhance Israel's standing among other Arab nations. Moreover, the Arab world is divided between the pro-Iran axis (Syria, Qatar, Hizbullah, Hamas) and anti-Iran axis (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan). The anti-Iran axis would rather isolate Syria and not give Syria the increased international standing which a peace agreement would bring it.
6. A Syrian-Israeli peace agreement will not enhance international support for Israel. The world has negligible interest in the Syria issue.

(9) The Only Plausible Defense: General Eiland concluded: "The present border line is the only one affording plausible defense for the State of Israel." He also advised that "it is preferable to continue managing the conflict rather than trying to solve it at an exorbitant price and risk. Should it ever be possible to reach another solution, then this can be re-examined."

I. The Golan's Additional Strategic Significance:

Iranian Land Bridge, etc. Ambitions: The vantage point of the Golan Heights has still additional strategic significance. Israel's surveillance and military capabilities can help

thwart Iran's ability to establish a dangerous land bridge to the Mediterranean; deployments of weapons of mass destruction; and advancements by the Iranian-Syrian-North Korean axis.

Potential War with Hezbollah: Hezbollah currently has 100,000 to 150,000 rockets pointing at Israel from Lebanon, and has thousands of rockets and fighters in Syria. If Israel relinquishes the Golan, there is great risk that Israel will need to fight Hezbollah in both Lebanon and in the Golan Heights. By contrast, Israel's retention of its portion of the Golan Heights would provide Israel with strategic advantages in any future war with Hezbollah.⁶⁸

Food and Water: In addition, Golan streams that run into the Sea of Galilee are the source of a significant percentage of Israel's fresh water.⁶⁹ In 1964, the Syrians attempted to impair Israeli access to fresh water through a damming project, which the IDF ultimately stopped. The 1999-2000 Syrian-Israeli peace talks collapsed when Syria insisted that it should receive a small parcel of land near the Sea of Galilee that was critical for Israel's water supply. About 40% of Israeli beef, 30% of Israeli fruit and 38% of Israeli wine exports come from the Golan.

CONCLUSION

Enshrining Israel's right to the Golan Heights, by conferring U.S. recognition, would strengthen the security and stability of Israel, our Middle East allies, the entire region, the U.S. and the free world.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., "Why Israel Should Keep the Golan Heights," by Steve Postal, *American Thinker*, Apr. 27, 2016, at

https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/04/why_israel_should_keep_the_golan_heights_.html

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Map showing streams from the Golan flowing into the Sea of Galilee, a major Israeli water basin, at "Golan Heights," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/aboutisrael/maps/pages/golan%20heights.aspx>