

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update June 27, 2019 ***(24th Savin, 5779)***



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For June 2019

WATCHTOWER DISCOVERED FROM BIBLICAL KING HEZEKIAH'S TIME: A 2700- year-old watchtower from the time of biblical King Hezekiah was recently discovered at a military base in southern Israel by an excavation that included members of the Israeli Paratroopers Brigade and recruits from commando units working alongside the Israel Antiquities Authority. The actual location of the site cannot be revealed for security purposes. In the time of King Hezekiah and the biblical prophets, soldiers on watchtowers warned the Israelites of approaching enemies. Today the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) still use similar watchtowers. The immense watchtower is 16.4 x 11.4 feet with some of the stones weighing 8 tons. The tower is two floors high. Hezekiah was the twelfth king of Judah and reigned in the 8th century B.C. His first act as king was to reopen the gates of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and to have them repaired. References to the watchmen who would have inhabited the watchtowers are mentioned several times in the Bible.

ISRAELI LASER SYSTEM TO PROTECT NATO TANKER TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT: A laser system designed by Israel's Elbit Systems to protect aircraft against infrared missiles will be implemented in NATO's Multinational Multi Role Tanker Transport Fleet (MMF) starting in 2020, the company announced last week. In a three-day series of flight tests at the end of May 2019, the system was integrated into A330 Multi Role Tanker Transport aircraft. J-Music functioned flawlessly throughout the tests, proving itself capable of defeating multiple hazard types. It successfully handled simultaneous threat scenarios and overcome head-on, tail-on and side-on threats from a number of ranges and at different altitudes. The German Air Force has also signed a \$73 million contract to acquire the J-Music DIRCM defense suite to protect aircraft from infrared missiles.

PATRIOTS RECEIVER JULIAN EDELMAN TOURS ISRAEL WITH ROBERT KRAFT: Patriots owner Robert Kraft — who was in Israel accepting the Genesis Prize on Thur. 20 June 2019 — has been on a

tour of the country with 15 current and former Pats, including Drew Bledsoe and Julian Edelman. The group visited Masada, the Dead Sea, and Jerusalem, had a Shabbat dinner with a rabbi, and put on a clinic for the Israel Football League. "Kraft goes to every site with them," said one source. He has previously brought over stars including Tom Brady. Last week Kraft pledged \$20 million to fight anti-Semitism.

ABBAS REJECTS USA ECONOMIC PEACE PLAN: Palestinian Chairman Mahmoud Abbas on Saturday 22 June 2019 reiterated his staunch rejection of a USA economic peace plan as Washington unveiled details of its long-awaited initiative, saying a political solution must come first. The United States said the economic aspect of its Middle East peace plan to be presented this week in Bahrain aims to raise more than \$50 billion for the Palestinians and create one million jobs for them within a decade. "We have said that we will not attend the workshop in Bahrain," Abbas told the central committee of his Fatah faction in Ramallah. The reason is that the economic situation should not be discussed before the political one. And as long as there is no political solution, we do not deal with any economic issues," he added. The Palestinian Authority headed by Abbas had already said it was boycotting the two-day conference -- dubbed the Peace to Prosperity Workshop -- that opens on Tues. 25 June 2019, in Bahrain. In a step likely to outrage Palestinian Authority leaders, the plan unveiled last weekend says that money to revive the Palestinian economy would be administered by a multinational development bank as a way to ensure better governance and prevent corruption. "Peace to Prosperity represents the most ambitious and comprehensive international effort for the Palestinian people to date," the White House said. The White House cast the plan -- to be discussed in more detail in Bahrain with finance chiefs of oil-rich Gulf Arab states -- as historic. The Palestinian Authority has boycotted the USA administration since Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017.

Abbas' stance is no surprise to anyone who has been watching the moves and patterns of the Palestinian Authority and its leaders for a decade and a half. While PA leaders have unceasingly put impossible demands on the Jewish state in return for a false peace they – unlike Israel's leaders - have not been willing at any point to make even a single small concession to those irrational mandates as a gesture of cooperation or goodwill. When Israel refuses to endanger its borders, its people and their communities the PA like a spoiled child threatens to resort to violence or manipulation of the UN or to use other unsavory methods to get its way. As Jason Greenblatt has rightly said, "Their leadership is happy with the status quo and would rather Palestinians suffer than at least explore a different path for a better future."

TRUMP MIDDLE EAST ENVOY: PALESTINIAN LEADERS PREFER LETTING THEIR PEOPLE SUFFER OVER SEEKING BETTER FUTURE: USA President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, Jason Greenblatt, lashed out at the Palestinian Authority on Friday 21 June 2019 over its refusal to take part in this week's American-organized conference in Manama on investment in the Palestinian economy. "The PA is calling for demonstrations against the Bahrain workshop. This tells you everything you need to know about their priorities & intentions. Their leadership is happy with the status quo and would rather Palestinians suffer than at least explore a different path for a better future." The "Peace to Prosperity" summit is set to take place on Tuesday and Wednesday, 25-26 June 2019. The event is supposed to mark the kick-off of the Trump administration's long-awaited Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative, spearheaded by the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner.

USA LAUNCHES CYBER-ATTACK AGAINST IRAN: President Donald Trump approved a cyber-attack offensive to disable Iranian computers that are used to control rockets and launch missiles. While Trump shied away from a military attack after authorizing one on Friday 21 June 2019, personnel with the USA Cyber Command launched a cyber-attack the previous night that has been in consideration since Iran reportedly attacked two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman. "This operation imposes costs on the growing Iranian cyber threat, but also serves to defend the United States Navy and shipping operations in the Strait of Hormuz," said Thomas Bossert, a former senior White House cyber official in the Trump administration. According to the report, for the past two years, the Iranian cyber forces have tried to hack USA naval ships in the Persian Gulf. "There's no question that there's been an increase in Iranian cyber activity," said Christopher Krebs, director

of DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. "Iranian actors and their proxies are not just your garden variety run-of-the-mill data thieves. These are the guys that come in and they burn the house down." In 2012, Iran launched the Shamoon virus on Saudi Aramco, nearly destroying 30,000 computers.

TRUMP SAYS USA WILL IMPOSE 'MAJOR' SANCTIONS ON IRAN STARTING THIS WEEK: President Trump said on Saturday 22 June 2019 that his administration was preparing an additional round of "major" sanctions against Iran amid heightened tensions between the two countries. "Iran cannot have Nuclear Weapons! Under the terrible Obama plan, they would have been on their way to being Nuclear in a short number of years, and existing verification is not acceptable. We are putting major additional sanctions on Iran," he wrote in a tweet. "I look forward to the day that sanctions come off Iran, and they become a productive and prosperous nation again. The sooner the better!" Concerns about the possibility of a military confrontation rose on Thur. 20 June 2019, after Iran, shot down a USA spy drone over the Strait of Hormuz. Officials in Tehran and Washington have disputed whether the drone was in Iranian airspace or not. Trump said in a tweet that the USA was "cocked & loaded" to retaliate on Thursday night, but that he ultimately decided against doing so because 150 people would have died. "We want to be proportionate," he said, though he did not rule out the possibility of future military action against Iran. "It's always on the table until we get this solved," he added. "We have a tremendously powerful military force in that area."

JEWISH CEMETERIES DESECRATED IN SOUTH AFRICA: Graves were vandalized in a South African Jewish cemetery over the weekend, prompting calls from global Jewish organizations for authorities to increase their vigilance against anti-Semitism. Four graves were reportedly damaged at the cemetery in the town of Strand, 50 kilometers southeast of Cape Town. The local Jewish community filed a complaint with the police. It was the third such incident in a week, following vandalism at two other Jewish cemeteries in the same district. Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog warned in a statement that anti-Semitic incidents around the world "don't let up for a moment" and called on the countries to step up actions against the phenomenon. "I appeal to governments around the world and to law enforcement authorities to not take it lightly, and to take a firm hand against any manifestation of anti-Semitism," he said. World Zionist Organization Vice Chairman Yaakov Hagoel urged South African authorities to find the culprits before the violence escalates and leads to bloodshed.

PENTAGON CALLS IRAN'S SHOOT-DOWN OF DRONE AN 'UNPROVOKED ATTACK': The USA military on Thur. 20 June 2019 said Iran carried out an "unprovoked attack" on a surveillance drone that was flying in international airspace. "This was an unprovoked attack on a USA surveillance asset that had not violated Iranian airspace at any time during its mission," Lt. Gen. Joseph Guastella, the commander of USA Air Forces Central Command in Qatar, said at a Pentagon briefing. Guastella acknowledged that a surface-to-air missile downed the RQ-4 Global Hawk and said the rocket had been fired from Iran. "The aircraft was over the Strait of Hormuz and fell into international waters," Guastella said, adding that the drone was flying at a high altitude and at least 21 miles away from the Iranian coastline. He accused Tehran of trying to disrupt the USA military's ability to monitor the area to secure the "free flow of commerce" following the assault last week on two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman. "This dangerous and escalatory attack was irresponsible and occurred in the vicinity of air corridors, possibly endangering innocent civilians," he said.

TRUMP GIVES IRAN AN ULTIMATUM: USA President Donald Trump sent a message to Iran setting a deadline for the rogue power to initiate talks, after which the USA will attack in retaliation for downing an American surveillance drone last week. Reuters quoted a source in the Iranian government which said Trump's message was passed via Oman and emphasized that the USA does not want war. Iran responded that "Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei opposes talks with the USA." Air France-KLM and Qantas have announced that they will avoid flying over parts of Iran due to "precautionary measures." Lufthansa, as well as USA airlines, noted the downed drone and said they will avoid flying over the Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz.

UK RABBI TO HOUSE OF LORDS: RISE IN ANTI-SEMITISM TODAY SIMILAR TO HOLOCAUST-ERA: The UK House of Lords debated on the subject of anti-Semitism in the country's politics on Thur. 20 June 2019, where their former chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks described the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe today much as that of Holocaust-era Europe. Sacks expressed his shock that when he visited Poland, he found that Warsaw Ghetto was located in the center of town. "Try to imagine 400,000 Hindus or Sikhs imprisoned within ghetto walls in the middle of London," Sacks said. "Imagine people passing those walls every day, knowing that behind them, thousands were dying or being sent to their deaths, and no one said a word. How did it happen? It happened because, in the 19th century, in the heart of emancipated Europe, anti-Semitism, once dismissed as a primitive prejudice of the Middle Ages, was reborn," Sacks continued.

Sacks brought up the different politicians of the 19th century during the Holocaust that allowed that same anti-Semitism of the Middle Ages to prevail once more. "That is where we are today," he emphasized. "Within living memory of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism has returned exactly as it did in the 19th century, just when people had begun to feel that they had finally vanquished the hatreds of the past. Today, there is a hardly a country in the world, certainly not a single country in Europe, where Jews feel safe," Sacks declared. "It is hard to emphasize how serious this is, not just for Jews but for our shared humanity." Pointing his finger at the long-running wave of anti-Semitism taking over the UK Labour Party, Sacks said that "a society, or for that matter, a political party that tolerates anti-Semitism, that tolerates any hate, has forfeited all moral credibility. You cannot build a future on the malign myths of the past," Sacks concluded. "You cannot sustain freedom on the basis of hostility and hate."

USA ANTI-SEMITISM ENVOY: ARMED GUARDS NEEDED AT SYNAGOGUES, JEWISH CENTERS: Elan Carr, the USA special envoy for monitoring and combating anti-Semitism, said in Jerusalem last week that in the USA, "We live in a time of danger. Any synagogue, every JCC, should have guards. God willing, may they never be needed, but they should be there." Carr said the threat comes from both a "pathological, ethnic, supremacist Right" and "an anti-Zionist Left." "We need to make this fight a joint, bipartisan fight. All decent people - Jewish and not Jewish - need to do it together. I don't care what ideological clothing it wears: Jew hatred is Jew hatred. We need to fight it and oppose it."

GERMANY ACCUSED OF DOWNPLAYING ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS BY MUSLIMS: The annual al-Quds Day march in Berlin features frequent calls about killing Israelis, Zionist conspiracies and chants of "free Palestine from the river to the sea." Flags of terrorist groups like Hamas and Hizbullah are on display, and imams regularly preach anti-Semitic verses from the Quran. Iran launched al-Quds Day starting in 1979. Yet some of the recent incidents documented at the Quds Day march in Berlin have been classified by authorities as forms of far-right anti-Semitism. Last month, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said that supporters of far-right groups were responsible for 90% of the 1,800 anti-Semitic incidents recorded in Germany in 2018. However, in a 2016 survey of German Jews who had experienced anti-Semitic incidents, 41% said the perpetrator was "someone with a Muslim extremist view" and another 16% said it was someone from the far left. Only 20% identified their aggressors as belonging to the far-right. In France, by contrast, more than half of anti-Semitism incidents, and virtually all the violent ones are perpetrated by immigrants from Muslim countries or their descendants, according to the National Bureau of Vigilance Against Anti-Semitism.

ILHAN OMAR BACKS AOC ON 'CONCENTRATION CAMPS' AT THE BORDER COMMENT: Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn, is backing her freshman colleague, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., over the claim that there were "concentration camps" along the southern border, saying what the USA government is doing fits the "general definition." Ocasio-Cortez created a firestorm during Monday's 17 June 2019 Livestream by declaring that the Trump administration was "running" concentration camps, invoking the Holocaust-link "never again" saying and claiming that a "fascist" presidency is currently in office. During an

interview the following day on Public Radio International, Omar echoed Ocasio-Cortez's stance. "When you look at what is taking place, people are being put in camps. These people are coming to the border. We are removing them from the border. We are placing them in camps. Some of them are being removed from communities and being put in what we're calling detention centers — but what are essentially camps." Earlier this month, Omar claimed that it was "un-American" for ICE to detain illegal immigrants and called for the agency to be defunded. Ocasio-Cortez has received plenty of blowback from critics but has been heavily defended from progressives as well as liberal journalists, who point to concentration camps that predate the Holocaust and their existence afterward.

BLACKLISTED TERRORISTS ARE STILL ACCESSING THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS DUE TO LOOPHOLE IN UN SANCTIONS: Accused al Qaeda and ISIS terrorists are being allowed to access their bank accounts even after the United Nations has frozen their accounts, according to documents the Wall Street Journal reviewed as well as people close to the matter. The UN blacklists members and supporters of terrorism, and blacklists are not supposed to be allowed easy access to their financials. This is mostly used as a way to ensure they don't continue funding terrorism. Blacklists' home countries are supposed to apply for UN exemptions, which allow accused terrorists to get small amounts of money to pay for food, rent, and other necessary living expenses. However, member countries are not monitoring blacklisted terrorists living in their countries and are allowing them to access much larger sums of money, according to UN officials. These exemptions are being granted loosely and without much oversight, according to the officials.

Khalifa al-Subaiy, a Qatari financier that the USA has accused of giving money to those heading up al Qaeda, is allowed to take up to \$10,000 a month from his frozen accounts. He funded Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was behind the 11 Sept. 2001 attacks. Khalifa al-Subaiy, who allegedly funded the 11 September attacks is able to access large sums of his money. The Security Council approved 71 out of 72 requests from terrorists to access money from accounts between 2008 and 2018, according to UN documents WSJ reviewed. There are over 250 al Qaeda and ISIS members or supporters, and many are allowed to access their frozen accounts by their home countries with no prior permission from the Security Council. The USA has expressed concerns about Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf nations regarding lack of enforcement. Gulf countries have accused Qatar of being loose with their regulations as well. "There are serious shortcomings. In essence, virtually everyone is in violation."

WORLD'S FIRST FULLY-ELECTRIC PLANE UNVEILED BY ISRAELI COMPANY: Eviation Aircraft Ltd., an Israeli aviation company, displayed the Eviation Alice, an entirely electric commuter plane, at the Paris Air Show last week. The Alice's unusual and modern look, which Eviation CEO Omer Bar-Yohay described as "whale-shaped," is due to its aerodynamic efficiency. The plane, which can seat nine passengers and two pilots, can fly at 273 miles per hour for up to 621 miles on one battery charge, at a cost of \$200 per hour of flight. The battery comprises 65% of the plane's weight. Eviation already has orders for a "double-digit" number of airplanes from USA regional carrier Cape Air, with which Eviation signed its first deal. Each plane will carry a \$4 million price tag. "Operating at a fraction of the costs of conventional jetliners, our Alice will redefine how people travel regionally and usher in a new era of flying that is quieter, cleaner, and cost-effective," Bar-Yohay said. The use of electric planes is a step in the right direction to a cleaner environment, as the high carbon emissions from standard planes have been a source of concern for environmentalists. Electric planes can also potentially decrease the high costs of plane travel due to the huge amount of oil planes require. The company is expecting Alice to be ready for commercial use by 2022.

YOUNG ISRAEL CONDEMNS OCASIO-CORTEZ: The National Council of Young Israel (NCYI) on Wed. 19 June 2019 sent a letter to Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) after she claimed that the United States "is running concentration camps on our southern border." The organization criticized Ocasio Cortez's decision to invoke Holocaust-related terminology as part of a political debate. Farley Weiss, President of the NCYI offered to meet with Rep. Ocasio-Cortez and help her learn more about the Holocaust and better

understand the deadly role that concentration camps played in the Nazis' abhorrent attempt to murder an entire generation of Jews. "There is simply no comparison with what happened in these concentration camps with what is occurring at the border. Applying the terminology that you choose to use denigrates the significance of the mass murder of Jews, and we urge you to be more sensitive to the dangers of using Holocaust-related expressions in conjunction with present-day political matters," he added. "Irrespective of any technical definition, concentrations camps conjure up shocking images of emaciated and persecuted Jews on death's door, and invoke frightening memories of one of the most horrendous chapters in Jewish history." Ocasio-Cortez's comments infuriated Republicans, including the party's third-ranking congresswoman Liz Cheney, who urged Ocasio-Cortez to "spend just a few minutes learning some actual history" about the six million Jews exterminated in the Holocaust. Several other Republicans weighed in with criticism, including Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) who said that "comparing the men and women serving our country to concentration camp guards does the Congress and country a great disservice."

HOLOCAUST RESEARCH CENTER YAD VASHEM CONDEMNS OCASIO-CORTEZ'S 'CONCENTRATION CAMP' COMPARISON: Several prominent Jewish groups, including Holocaust research center Yad Vashem, responded to Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram comparison of migrant detention centers to Nazi "concentration camps" on Twitter this week. "Concentration camps assured a slave labor supply to help in the Nazi war effort, even as the brutality of life inside the camps helped assure the ultimate goal of 'extermination through labor.' Learn about concentration camps," Yad Vashem said in a tweet early Wed. morning 19 June 2019. The tweet included a link to an article from the organization about concentration camps. Ocasio-Cortez invoked the "never again" phrase, which refers to the horrors of the Holocaust, and made a comparison between holding centers on the USA southern border and Nazi concentration camps in an Instagram live video earlier this week.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of New York wrote a letter to the congresswoman expressing their concerns. The letter says that the group was "deeply disturbed" by the language used in her Instagram video, explaining the meaning behind "never again" as well as the true definition and context of what a "concentration camp" actually is. The letter goes on to invite Ocasio-Cortez to visit a real concentration camp so to reach "a better understanding of the horrors of the Holocaust". Zionist Organization of America's (ZOA) National President Morton Klein also issued a statement on Twitter. Ocasio-Cortez's comments were an "abhorrent insults to the memory of the 6 million Jews who were intentionally slaughtered, worked to death, starved, gassed and tortured in the real Nazi-Fascist concentration camp," he said. Klein's statement concludes by calling Ocasio-Cortez's comments "a moronic analogy", adding "she doesn't belong in Congress." House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy similarly criticized Ocasio-Cortez at a press conference, for her comments on Instagram. "I think Congresswoman AOC needs to apologize," he stated. "Not only to the nation but to the world. She does not understand history," he continued.

RAPE OF 7-YEAR-OLD BY PALESTINIAN CALLED 'TERRORISM': The rape of a seven-year-old Israeli girl by a Palestinian man has been deemed a hate-motivated "terrorist attack." The suspect, a resident of the of Deir Qaddis near Modi'in Illit, who was employed as a school cleaner in a settlement, was charged this week for the alleged rape, assault, and abduction of the child. Police claim that the man met the child during his work as a school cleaner, offered her candy to inspire her trust in him, and eventually led her forcibly to a house near the school to assault her. The attorney for the family said that the suspect attacked the girl because she was Jewish. The crime was "pure hate expressed by a group of scums who acted in defiance of all human values just because the victim was Jewish," said the attorney, Haim Blaicher. The family is not making any statements about the case. "This is not pedophilia, but plain terrorism," Yisrael Beytenu chairman Avigdor Liberman said on social media, arguing in favor of sentencing terrorists in such cases to death. PM Benjamin Netanyahu said that the crime "moves all of our hearts," and called on the courts to punish the perpetrator to the full extent of the law. National Union chairman MK Bezalel Smotrich called for the death

penalty against the rapist. “There is no limit to the evil and cruelty,” Smotrich said. “If only we could impose the death penalty on this vile person.

‘MOTHER OF 7-YEAR- OLD RAPE VICTIM ON VERGE OF TOTAL COLLAPSE’: The suspected rapist indicted for the abduction and rape of a seven-year-old Israeli girl used a local family’s home he was renovating to carry out the sexual assault. On Sunday 16 June 2019, 46-year-old Mahmoud Nazmi Abed Alhamid Katusa was indicted at the IDF’s Ofer prison outside of Jerusalem on charges of aggravated rape. Katusa is a resident of the Palestinian Authority-controlled town of Deir Qaddis, which is located next to the Israeli city of Modi’in Illit. Katusa, who is suspected of raping a seven-year-old girl after abducting her from her school, had been employed at an elementary school in the Modi’in area. Investigators say Katusa met the girl at the school, and befriended her, talking with her and giving her candies. Once he had gained her confidence, Katusa asked the girl to leave school with him and go to a nearby house. When the girl objected, Katusa carried her off, throwing her on the ground to pacify her. Katusa took the girl to a home near the school, where several other Arab workers were present. “I’m going to do something fun for you,” Katusa told the girl. Aided by two other Arab workers present in the home at the time, Katusa removed the girl’s clothes and then raped her. The other Arab workers held the girl’s arms and legs, and covered her eyes, while she cried and asked to go home. Haim Bleicher, the attorney representing the girl’s family, later said that the two accomplices mocked the girl during the rape, saying she “deserved it”. Two days later when the girl returned to her school she told her teacher what had happened and identified Katusa as the perpetrator. Police arrested Katusa for the rape, while the investigation into the incident continues. While Katusa is in custody and under indictment, his accomplices remain at large and are likely still employed in the town where the rape occurred. The family, meanwhile, is struggling to help their daughter cope with the traumatic attack while keeping her identity secret. According to a source close to the family, the girl’s parents have been “physically” affected by the ordeal. “The parents are in a terrible situation, they really cannot deal with this incident. The mother is on the verge of total collapse.”

EGYPT’S OUSTED PRESIDENT MOHAMMED MORSI DIES DURING TRIAL: Egypt’s former President Mohammed Morsi, ousted by the military in 2013 after one year in office, has collapsed in a courtroom and died, officials say. A top figure in the now-banned Islamist movement Muslim Brotherhood, Morsi had just spoken from a cage at a hearing on charges of espionage. State TV said the cause of death was a heart attack. Activists and his family had long said Morsi was not receiving treatment for serious health problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes and was constantly being held in solitary confinement. Morsi collapsed moments after addressing the court in Cairo over charges of espionage related to suspected contacts with the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, which had close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. He spoke for some five minutes from a soundproof glass cage which officials said was designed to prevent him from disrupting proceedings. Morsi was pronounced dead in hospital at 16:50 local time.

IRAN SHOOTS DOWN USA NAVAL DRONE IN PERSIAN GULF REGION: Iran shot down a USA naval surveillance drone near the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian and American officials said on Thur. 20 June 2019, adding to weeks of tensions in the Persian Gulf region amid growing concerns of a wider military confrontation. Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps said that it targeted the drone inside Iranian airspace over the southern province of Hormozgan, next to the strategic Strait of Hormuz. The USA Central Command confirmed the incident Thursday but denied the aircraft was in Iranian airspace. The Revolutionary Guard’s chief commander, Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami, called the downing of the drone “a clear message to America.” Nearly a quarter of the world’s oil passes through the waterway, which connects Middle East energy producers to markets around the globe.

IN FIRST, ISRAELI WINS EUROPEAN FENCING CHAMPIONSHIP: Israeli fencer Yuval Freilich this week won the gold medal in the European Fencing Championships in Dusseldorf, Germany. Freilich, who ranked 40th in the world, managed to defeat Italian Andrea Santarelli, ranked 13th, in the contest’s final. The

two ended the first third of their fight in a tie at 3:3, but Freilich took the lead in the next two thirds and finished 15:9. Freilich is the first Israeli fencer to win a European championship. Freilich, 24, grew up in the settlement of Neve Daniel. He is the son of Australian immigrants and has been fencing since age 5. He won two gold medals in teen championships in 2014 and 2015 and a silver in the under-23 category in 2016. "Really a fantastic day", he said.

ANCIENT OBSERVATION TOWER DISCOVERED IN PRESENT IDF PARATROOPER BASE: An ancient observation tower was discovered at an IDF paratrooper base on Wed. 19 June 2019 dating back to the days of King Hezekiah, who ruled the Kingdom of Judah almost 3,000 years ago. "In the days of the First Temple, the Kingdom of Judah built a range of towers and fortresses as points of communication, warning, and signaling, to transmit messages and field intelligence," according to Valdik Lifshitz director of the excavation. The messages would be transmitted through smoke and fire, depending on the time of the day. The project was carried out by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority in a joint effort with the IDF and the Ministry of Defense.



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