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ISRAEL CONSIDERS TAKING LAND FROM JEWISH COMMUNITY FOR PALESTINIAN HIGHWAY

The Israeli government, pushed by the Obama administration to come up with good will gestures to get the recently inaugurated indirect talks going, will consider expropriating land allocated to Jewish communities in order to pave a road for Palestinians to the new Arab city of Rawabi. The Israeli government has already allocated water resources to Rawabi, which has just started to be built. The land, located in territory Israel acquired in the 1967 war, will be used to pave a three-kilometer road linking Ramallah with Rawabi, which Qatar-financed, first planned Palestinian city. Israelis living nearby have already launched a campaign to halt the construction of the town and enlisted support of right-wing legislators. Israel also reportedly plans to place large swath of additional West Bank land under full Palestinian control. These gestures are being made just as US special envoy to the Middle East George Mitchell returns to oversee the indirect peace negotiations.

By on Monday, May 17, 2010

PROF. NOAM CHOMSKY BARRED FROM TERRITORIES

A reportedly "overzealous" clerk at Israel's border crossing with Jordan refused to allow Noam Chomsky, a fiercely anti-Israel American academic, to enter the country. Chomsky had been invited by Palestinians to lecture at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank. An icon of the radical left, Chomsky had also been slated to meet with Palestinian leaders. After being barred from entering, he was quoted as comparing Israel with a "Stalinist regime." Israel's interior ministry said the decision to keep Chomsky out was due to a misunderstanding and the official at the border was reportedly reprimanded. But by this time, Chomsky, 82, had already spoke widely to the international press criticizing Israel's behavior.

By on Monday, May 17, 2010

IRAQI VOTE RECOUNT = NO CHANGE

An official with Iraq's election commission says the recount of the Baghdad vote has not changed the result of the March parliamentary election in Iraq in which a Sunni-backed candidate narrowly won over the Shi'ite prime minister. According to Iraq's election commission, a recount preserved the narrow victory for Ayad Allawi over Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki. This now paves the way for negotiations for the next prime minister and could lower uncertainty that could lead to a surge in violence. It is expected that a coalition of Shi'ites would ultimately back Maliki over the Sunni Allawi, even though he won the majority of the seats.

By on Monday, May 17, 2010

REPORT: EGYPT SEVERS TIES WITH HAMAS

There have been reports that Egypt has decided to sever all ties with the leaders of Hamas, which would in effect keep them locked up inside the blockaded Gaza Strip. This move reportedly was due to Cairo's disappointment with Hamas' refusal to accept an Egyptian-brokered plan for Palestinian reconciliation between

Hamas and Fatah and displeasure with a campaign of incitement against Egypt led by Hamas leaders. Hamas has recently blamed Egypt of using poison gas inside smuggling tunnels that caused at least four Palestinian deaths.

By on Monday, May 17, 2010

IRAN AGREES TO SWAP HOMEMADE ENRICHED URANIUM FOR FOREIGN MATERIAL

Touted as a possible solution to a nuclear standoff, Iran announced it has agreed to send the bulk of its nuclear material to Turkey in exchange for enriched uranium fuel. The agreement was reached through the mediation of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva who is currently visiting Tehran. Iranian officials said they would now send 1,200 kilograms of 3.5 percent enriched uranium to Turkey. It expected some 120 kilograms of 20% enriched uranium from either the United States, Russia, China, Britain, Germany or France. Despite the announcement, an Iranian foreign ministry official reiterated that Iran would continue enriching its own uranium to 20%, a move experts feared would put it closer to making nuclear weapons. It remains to be seen if this change in Iranian policy will ease international concerns over Iran's quest for nuclear weapons and US-led efforts to impose sanctions on Tehran.

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