

Newsbytes

The First Watch

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

9th of Av Events

(the 9th of Av will be observed this weekend by all Jews and floats around the calendar per their 360 day year, like all Jewish feasts.)

This is a list of secular events that happened on the 9th day of the Jewish month of Av to the Jews. All these are verifiable in the history books.

- The Jewish Commentary, the Mishna, records that the people believed the evil report of the spies and mourned all night in fear. They turned against Moses and the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb (the only two from Egypt that entered the promised land). (Ta'anit 29a says it happens on the 9th of Av, Numbers 14:1-10 just records the curse from the Lord and the revolt against Moses and not the date.) - This event started their 40 year wandering in the desert.
- Destruction of the 1st temple, 29 July 587 BC (9 Av 3174)
- Destruction of the 2nd temple, 4 Aug 70 AD (9 Av 3830)
- The Roman army plowed Jerusalem with salt in 25 July 71 AD (9 Av 3831)
- The destruction of Simeon Bar Cochba's army in 5 Aug 135 AD (9 Av 3895)
- First Crusade declared by Pope Urban II. 10,000 Jews killed in first month of Crusade. Crusades bring death and destruction to thousands of Jews, totally obliterate many communities in Rhineland and France. 14 July 1095 (9 Av 4855)
- The Martyrs of York - 500 Jews died as a result of the rich storming a castle in York England, killing them all on 14 July 1190. (9 Av 4950)
- England expelled all of the Jews in 18 July 1290 AD (9 Av 5050)
- Spain expelled all of the Jews in 2 August 1492 AD (9 Av 5252)
- World War I is declared on the ninth of Av, 1 August 1914 (9 Av 5674)
- Russia mobilized for World War I and launched persecutions against the Jews in Eastern Russia on this day too. 1 August 1914 (9 Av 5674)
- On the 10th of July 1942, the Germans began a systematic liquidation of the Ghetto, deporting Jews to extermination camps at the rate of six to ten thousand per day. Deportation started on 9th Av. By the Autumn there were only 40,000 Jews left in Warsaw. By early 1943, the Jews refused to cooperate with the Germans and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began. Renewed attempts to start deportations were answered with reprisals. (9 Av 5702)

Two events on a given day is 1 in 365 days. 3 events on the same day is $1 \times 365 \times 365 = 133,225$

Hence, the odds on these twelve events happening to the same people, the same country, over the centuries on the same day is 1 chance in 15.318 billion times a billion times a billion or:
15,318,685,820,000,000,000,000,000!

(365 raised to the 11th power = 1.531868582×10 to the 28th power.)

A 1-in-20 is a notable event.

QUIET URGENCY IN FACE OF PROBABLE WAR

by Brian Schrauger Wednesday, August 3, 2016 News and Views

Without fanfare, Israeli officials are quietly concerned about the nation's ability to protect its citizens from an imminent war with Hezbollah, the "Party of Allah" in Lebanon. Very concerned.

Behind the headlines, Israel is quietly concerned about protecting its citizens from an attack just across its northern border with Lebanon. Hezbollah, the so-called "Party of Allah" is known to have at least 150 thousand missiles in its armory. They are all earmarked for the Jewish State.

Under Iran's control, it is virtually certain that the only reason Hezbollah has not yet attacked Israel is because of Syria. Like Hezbollah in Lebanon, that country's President Assad is also a vassal of the Islamic Republic. Almost all of Tehran's immediate efforts are focused on keeping Assad in power. Accordingly, Hezbollah has been on the ground, shedding blood for a cause that is not its own priority. This sacrifice for its Persian masters is held together by mutual commitment to Israel's destruction.

Iran wants it, Hezbollah wants it. Israel is their next objective and everyone knows it. Including Israel.

Just over a month ago, in June, Prime Minister Netanyahu's Cabinet approved a study on the threats that the country will face in a future war with Hezbollah. The results were sobering. In its current rate of readiness, Israel would have to endure two weeks of missile attacks, and at a count of 1,500 missiles per day.

The number is huge: as many as 21,000 missiles, maybe more, would be launched before the assault could be stopped. Some of these missiles Israel will not be able to intercept. Some will hit their targets.

Those targets will include any location in Israel. No city, no region, will be exempt. Unlike rockets fired from Gaza in 2014, missiles from the north are sophisticated and powerful. Able to reach every part of Israel with devastating payloads, they have navigational systems provided by Iran. Only last week, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the FDD, reported that, according to their analysis of the threat, Israel officials are "talking in terms of thousands of civilian deaths."

Although these numbers are not bandied about in Israel's everyday media, they are a matter of public record. Still, most Israelis, it seems, are thinking about future conflicts in the framework of the 2014 war with Hamas. It is perhaps for this reason that, according to a recent poll, only 25 percent reported they would not feel safe during a future missile attack. In light of Hezbollah's armory, the corresponding implication that 75 percent would feel safe might indicate unrealistic optimism.

It should be no surprise, then, that Israel's National Emergency Authority is anxious to ramp up the country's ability to protect its populace. Haaretz, an Israeli paper, reported Monday that the Emergency Authority has announced a need for 500 million shekel (\$130 million US) per year to reinforce and improve Israel's defenses.

Meanwhile Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, head of Hezbollah, is boasting about his organization's connection.

"We are open about the fact that Hezbollah's budget, its income, its expenses, everything it eats and drinks, its weapons and rockets, are from the Islamic Republic of Iran," he bragged on 24 June 2016.

Tehran is no less clear. Almost one year ago, on 12 August 2015, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met with Nasrallah in Beirut. Fresh from success in negotiating a nuclear development agreement with the United Nations appointed "G5 plus 1" league of nations, he was exuberant.

According to the Hezbollah's Al-Manar television network, "Zarif said that the nuclear agreement between Tehran and world powers has created an historic opportunity for regional cooperation to fight extremism and face threats posed by the Zionist entity."

In short, barring divine intervention, there is an attack coming from Israel's north and it is going to be a big one.

This one is long but very good...

The Pope and Holy War

by Denis MacEoin

August 3, 2016 at 5:30 am

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/8604/pope-holy-war-jihad>

The West that jihadists now terrorize has allowed itself to be weakened. A combination of political correctness, fear of giving offense, fear of combat, and a reluctance to upset illusory stability has led to an incredible series of opportunities for the jihadists.

We have dropped our guard and turned away. Not because we have no security forces. We do. But because we often are not looking at the right things: the texts and sermons that prefigure radicalisation.

"[T]he Noble Quran appoints the Muslims as guardians over humanity in its minority, and grants them the rights of suzerainty and dominion over the world in order to carry out this sublime commission. ... We have come to the conclusion that it is our duty to establish sovereignty over the world and to guide all of humanity to the sound precepts of Islam and to its teachings..." — Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood.

On the morning of July 26, a priest serving mass, an elderly man of 85, Father Jacques Hamel, was butchered before his altar by one of two knife-wielding devotees of the Islamic State. His killer slit his throat and might very well have proceeded to behead him, as is the wont of many jihadi executioners. The followers of a faith that honours murderers as martyrs (shuhada') created a martyr for quite another faith.

In both Greek and Arabic, the terms "martyr" and shahid mean exactly the same thing: "a witness". Father Hamel was the latest in a long line of Christian martyrs who have been slain by men of violence, supposedly in order to attest to the sole truth of their faith. Many Muslim martyrs have died in much that way, but even more have given their lives while waging war (jihad) to conquer territories for Islam.[1]

The flag of the Islamic State reads "la ilaha illa'llah, Muhammadun rasulu'llah". The words mean: "There is no God but God; Muhammad is the prophet of God". Those two phrases are known as the shahada, the bearing of witness. You see it everywhere today, now in Syria, then again in France or the UK. But shahada also means martyrdom. And martyrdom while committing violence is what the killers of an innocent man of God achieved on that day when armed police found them and shot them dead outside the church they had desecrated.

On the following day, the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, issued a statement on the event, and for a moment it seemed that he had finally got things right. He said the world was now at war. Decades after the war started, here was a religious leader and statesman who seemed to have awakened to the fact that Western countries have been unwillingly and ineffectively failing to wage a war against Islamic radicalism. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that Islamic radicalism has been waging a war with us.

But then he blew it. What he then said was:

"It's war, we don't have to be afraid to say this ... a war of interests, for money, resources. I am not speaking of a war of religions. Religions don't want war. The others want war."

What?

Is slaughtering a priest at his altar linked to "interests, money, resources"? Were the killers driven by a longing for social justice, for more money, for access to greater resources? Did they think the violent death of a harmless priest would bring them any of that? They had not gone to steal any of the valuable altar table objects, the censers, the candlesticks, the crucifix, the monstrance. The killers had been shouting "Allahu akbar", literally "God is greater" (than everything, especially, to Muslims, the supposedly non-monotheistic Christian Trinity and the Church). As we know only too well, "Allahu akbar" is a religious phrase that Muslims use often. It is the beginning of the call to prayer, the adhan, repeated six times, five times a day, preceded and followed by the shahada. It has been ringing in Western ears every time Muslims in Europe and North America carry out attacks or as a prelude to a suicide attack. It is precisely because Muslims believe that their God (named in Arabic as Allah) is superior to all other gods, because to them Islam is the greatest of all religions and lastly, because Islam is destined to conquer the world either by conversion or through violence.

What did Pope Francis mean when he said "Religions don't want war. The others want war"? This is a man with access to endless colleges of scholars, to academics worldwide, to specialists in Islam and the Middle East. It is simply not true. To begin with, who are these "others"? Non-religious people? Atheists? Agnostics? Protestants?

In order to win a war, you have to be able to identify your enemy, understand his motives, figure out just what drives his soldiers to risk their lives in battle, know for what cause mothers and wives should send their sons and husbands to fight, knowing they may never return. Ignore all that, invent false motives for the enemy, or fail to know his ultimate aims, and you will lose. "If you know the enemy and know yourself you need not fear the results of a hundred battles", said the great Chinese general, Sun Tzu, in his Art of War.

A day after that remark, the Pope sadly compounded his ignorance. A report in a Catholic magazine, Crux, stated that:

The pope said that in every religion there are violent people, "a small group of fundamentalists," including in Catholicism. "When fundamentalism goes as far as murdering ... you can murder with your tongue and also with the knife," he said.

"I believe that it's not fair to identify Islam with violence. It's not fair and it's not true," he continued, adding that he has had a long conversation with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, the Cairo-based Islamic university often described as the Vatican of the Sunni world.

"I know how they think. They look for peace, encounter," he said. Unfortunately, it is clear that the Pope (along with hundreds of politicians and religious leaders in the West, although not in Israel) does not know his enemy at all. If he thinks that "religions do not want war," it is also clear he has never studied Islam or received truthful instruction in it from anyone. Here is why.

The later chapters of the Qur'an contain dozens of verses calling on the believers to go out to fight jihad or to use their resources to pay others to do so. The purpose of jihad is "the strengthening of Islam, the protection of believers and voiding the earth of unbelief".[2]

According to a modern expert on jihad, "the Qur'an... presents a well-developed religious justification for waging war against Islam's enemies".[3]

Islam is not merely a religion; it is a system of governance. Here is Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the ubiquitous Muslim Brotherhood:

Islam is a comprehensive system which deals with all spheres of life. It is a state and a homeland (or a government and a nation). It is morality and power (or mercy and justice); it is a culture and a law (or knowledge and jurisprudence). It is material and wealth (or gain and prosperity). It is an endeavour and a call (or an army and a cause). And finally, it is true belief and worship.[4]

What does this mean for non-Muslims? Banna again makes this clear:

This means that the Noble Quran appoints the Muslims as guardians over humanity in its minority, and grants them the rights of suzerainty and dominion over the world in order to carry out this sublime commission. Hence it is our concern, not that of the West, and it pertains to Islamic civilization, not to materialistic civilization. We have come to the conclusion that it is our duty to establish sovereignty over the world and to guide all of humanity to the sound precepts of Islam and to its teachings, without which mankind cannot attain happiness.[5]

Pope Francis recently said, "I am not speaking of a war of religions. Religions don't want war," and "I believe that it's not fair to identify Islam with violence. It's not fair and it's not true." Hassan al-Banna (left), founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, wrote that "the Noble Quran appoints the Muslims as guardians over humanity in its minority, and grants them the rights of suzerainty and dominion over the world in order to carry out this sublime commission."

The Islamic Tradition literature, found in the six canonical collections, lays down descriptions of jihad and instructions on how to fight it. Please do not be misled by the oft-repeated obfuscation, "The greater jihad is a struggle with the self, a spiritual war". There is no mention of this idea in the classical texts.[6] For centuries, jihad has meant physical warfare. Even the mystical Sufi brotherhoods have engaged in that extremely physical struggle.[7]

The Islamic prophet Muhammad led his men into battle on many occasions and sent out around 100 raiding parties and expeditions.[8] His successors, the caliphs, did the same. In the half-century after Muhammad's death in 632 C.E., Muslim forces had conquered half the known world. Jihad wars continued to be fought on an annual basis by all the great Islamic empires, with no exception.

The first two major Islamic empires, that of the Umayyads (661-750) and their successors under a new dynasty of caliphs, the Abbasids (750-1258) carried out annual expeditions (usually two or more per year) against the Byzantine Empire (based in Constantinople). These raids were an ongoing tradition based on the earliest jihad wars in both the West and the East. They were never haphazard, but well planned. There were usually two summer campaigns, often be followed by winter expeditions.

The summer jihads usually took the form of two separate attacks. One onslaught was called the "expedition of the left". It was launched from the border fortresses of Sicily, whose troops were mainly of Syrian origin. The larger "expedition of the right" would be carried out from launched from the eastern Anatolian province of Malatya, deploying Iraqi troops. These jihad expeditions reached their height under the third major empire, that of the Ottomans, who conquered Constantinople in 1453, thereby bringing an end to the Byzantine Empire. Constantinople was renamed Istanbul and its chief basilica, Hagia Sophia, was turned into the imperial mosque of the Ottomans.

Today's jihadist organizations, from the Islamic State to al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Islamic Jihad, Jabhat al-Nusra, Boko Haram, Hamas, al-Shabaab and hundreds of others are simply carrying out, on a broader canvas, the jihad wars of the nineteenth century.[9]

Jihadists seem to do this in preference to missionary work (although other groups such as the Pakistani Tablighi Jamaat do plenty of that) because their wars hark back to the days of Muhammad and his companions, the first three warlike generations. The term salafi, used now for the most radical Islamic groups, comes from salaf, or "ancestor," but with a specialized meaning of the first three generations of Islam. Muhammad, his first followers, their children and grandchildren. Jihadists do it because, having lost military strength since the collapse of the Ottoman empire in 1918, they seem still to feel compelled to fight back against the power of the West, the triumph of the Christians (or in Israel, the Jews). God, in their eyes, promised his followers, the Muslims, that they would one day rule the world,[10] and for many centuries, Muslims may have thought that was actually happening. Then such hopes were dashed. Western empires started conquering, colonizing and ruling Muslim states, such as northern India, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, and elsewhere -- a reversal quite unthinkable.

To fight back, jihadists have chosen to use the best weapon at their disposal: terrorism. Worse, the West they now terrorize has allowed itself to be weakened. A combination of political correctness, fear of giving offense, fear of combat, and a reluctance to upset illusory stability has led to an incredible series of opportunities for the jihadists.

The young Islamist who killed the priest in France, for example, had been twice arrested for trying to head to Syria

to serve with the Islamic State. At the time of the murder, the kindly authorities had forced him to wear an ankle bracelet with which to be monitored -- but his curfew was only overnight. During the day, he was allowed to wander the streets freely. On that fateful morning, he decided to walk with his companion into a nearby church and fulfil his longings for martyrdom and for killing a Christian.

Unfortunately, Pope Francis could not be more wrong. One religion has wanted to fight wars from its inception. We have had more than 1400 years to guard ourselves against that, as when the Ottoman Empire was stopped at the Gates of Vienna in 1683. Now, we have dropped our guard and turned away. Not because we have no security forces. We do. But because we often are not looking for the right things: the texts and sermons that prefigure radicalisation.

Why do young Muslims turn from ordinariness to recruitment for the extremists? Young Christians, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, and Baha'is do not move in that direction. Could it be because so many young Muslims, first in the Islamic countries, now in the West, are taught from an early age that Islam aspires to domination, that jihad is not an evil but rather an expression of their faith, that they suffer as victims of "Islamophobia," that Western women are immoral, and that other religions are false?

It is time to wake up. We are indeed at war, whether we like it or not. "You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you", Leon Trotsky said.

Our enemy is an extremist version of Islam that has yet to undergo a reformation, one that takes Muslims not back to the seventh century, but forwards to the twenty-first and possibly beyond.

Dr. Denis MacEoin, based in England, is an expert on Islam.

[1] "The concept of martyrdom developed differently in Islam than it did in either Judaism or Christianity. Martyrdom in Islam has a much more active sense: the prospective martyr is called to seek out situations in which martyrdom might be achieved." David Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, University of California Press, 2015, p. 26.

[2] Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*, The Hague, 1979, p. 10

[3] Cook, p. 11.

[4] Hasan al-Banna, *Message for Youth*, trans. Muhammad H. Najm, London, 1993, p. 6

[5] Wendell Charles (trans), *The Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna (1906-1949)*, University of California Press, 1978, pp. 70-73.

[6] "Traditions indicating that jihad meant spiritual warfare... are entirely absent from any of the official, canonical collections (with the exception of al-Tirmidhi, who cites 'the fighter is one who fights his passions'; they appear most often in the collections of ascetic material or proverbs." Cook, p. 35.

[7] "This paradigm persisted into medieval times, where we often find the Sufi groups fighting the enemies of Islam. For example, after defeating the Crusaders under Guy de Lusignan at the Battle of the Horns of Hattin (1187), the Muslim leaders Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi [Saladin] (1169-91) gave the captive Crusaders to several of his Sufi regiments to slaughter." Cook, p. 45.

[8] A comprehensive and fully annotated list is available at Wikipedia.

[9] For details of these, see Rudolph Peters, *passim*.

[10] "He (God) it is who sent his Messenger [Muhammad] bringing guidance and the True Religion in order to make [Islam] dominant over all other religions" (Qur'an 9:33). The fifth verse of that same sura is known as the "Sword Verse", because it is the first to encourage physical attacks on non-Muslims

Could Russia be preparing for a preemptive nuclear strike on the US? Part 2 by Utopia: the Collapse

August 2016 – WASHINGTON – With tensions between Russia and the West at post-cold war highs, a former NATO deputy military chief is now saying that a nuclear war with Russia over the Baltic nations in 2017 is "entirely plausible" according to RT. General Sir Richard Shirreff, from Britain, served at the second highest NATO military office in Europe between 2011 and 2014, has written a fictional book about a nuclear war with Russia in 2017 triggered by a dispute of the Baltic nations. While the story is indeed fictional, Shirreff said the story is based on

an “entirely plausible” scenario. –Zero Hedge

How did it come to this? The balance of power involving the nuclear arms race between Russia and the U.S. is a chess game. If you’re going to play the game, you not only have to know the rules of the games involving the movement of the chess pieces – you have to also understand your opponent’s strategy. In order to win, you have to be smart enough to exploit your opponent’s blunders. Unfortunately, when it comes to chess – Russia has a long undisputed history of producing undefeatable grand chess-masters. Therefore, it can be said, Russia approaches the nuclear arms race with the U.S. as if it was just that – a chess game, whose every move the Russian nation’s entire existence depended upon.

The U.S. on the other hand, particularly under the Obama administration, has seen America’s nuclear arsenal as a bargaining chip for peace moreso than as a deterrence to prevent an unthinkable mutually assured holocaust. The elimination of nuclear weapons can only be approached by the same “paradox” as M.A.D., that is M.D.S., or mutual dilution in strength. However, in this chess game, Russia took advantage of two things – America’s push to reduce its nuclear stock piles under the START treaties, and Barack Obama’s naiveté and inexperience as a seasoned politician to know the stark difference between chess and checkers. Obama wanted to rid the world of nuclear weapons at almost any cost rather than face the daunting task of staring down his Russian counterparts into the abyss until both sides reached a congenial and verifiable agreement on the mutual reduction of nuclear arms.

In the end, Obama was more concerned with short-term fixes and resolutions that would hold-up during his administration than he was about securing long-term solutions that would eradicate nuclear weapons from the face of the planet once and for all. A series of blunders was enacted by President Obama that, in our estimation, tipped the balance of power in Russia's favor. This would lead to more aggressive military action by Russia in the Baltic region and call for a complete reordering of Russia's nuclear forces by Putin to attain a strategic advantage over the U.S. and its NATO allies.

Via The Huffington Post/Reuters: “In March of 2012, President Barack Obama was caught on camera on Monday assuring outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev he will have “more flexibility” to deal with contentious issues like missile defense after the U.S. presidential election. Obama, during talks in Seoul, urged Moscow to give him “space” until after the November ballot, and Medvedev said he would relay the message to incoming Russian president Vladimir Putin. The unusually frank exchange came as Obama and Medvedev huddled together on the eve of a global nuclear security summit in the South Korean capital, unaware their words were being picked up by microphones as reporters were led into the room...” -Huffington Post - Below: A clip from a CNN news cast with then presidential hopeful, Mitt Romney.

April 6, 2010 - Before Obama’s meeting with Medvedev: WASHINGTON —The Obama administration will release a new national nuclear-weapons strategy Tuesday that makes only modest changes to U.S. nuclear forces, leaving intact the longstanding U.S. threat to use nuclear weapons first, even against non-nuclear nations.

Also for the first time, nations complying with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations that attack the U.S. or its allies with chemical or biological weapons will no longer be threatened with nuclear retaliation, the official said. But the president will make clear they would “face the prospect of a devastating conventional attack,” the official said. The document, known as the Nuclear Posture Review, is the first rethinking of the U.S. nuclear strategy since President George W. Bush released his revised policies three months after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. –WSJ

Obama Illegally Airlifted \$400 Million To Iran in Unmarked Plane

August 3, 2016 Daniel Greenfield frontpagemag.com

1. Obama had made a point of rejecting ransom payments to ISIS, yet paid them to Iran. The distinction is rather obvious. Both are Jihadist organizations, but Obama wants ties with the latter, not the former.
2. Funding Iran directly funds terrorism because the Iranian regime is effectively a terror state. Back in the Senate, Obama fought against the classification of the Revolutionary Guard, a key Iranian political-military institution, as terrorists. He's remained consistent since then.

3. This is simply treason. Obama is aiding and abetting the murder of Americans. He's funding terrorism. He's funding Iran's wars in the region, which aside from Israel, include campaigns in Iraq and Syria that have dragged the United States in.

The Obama administration secretly organized an airlift of \$400 million worth of cash to Iran that coincided with the January release of four Americans detained in Tehran, according to U.S. and European officials and congressional staff briefed on the operation afterward.

Wooden pallets stacked with euros, Swiss francs and other currencies were flown into Iran on an unmarked cargo plane, according to these officials. The U.S. procured the money from the central banks of the Netherlands and Switzerland, they said.

Note the secretive Air America type tactics.

Since the cash shipment, the intelligence arm of the Revolutionary Guard has arrested two more Iranian-Americans. Tehran has also detained dual-nationals from France, Canada and the U.K. in recent months. At the time of the prisoner release, Secretary of State John Kerry and the White House portrayed it as a diplomatic breakthrough. Mr. Kerry cited the importance of "the relationships forged and the diplomatic channels unlocked over the course of the nuclear talks."

Obama picked up foreign money from foreign banks, put them in an unmarked cargo plane and then flew them to Iran. This is not the normative way of transferring money to foreign governments.

This is the way criminals operate. Criminals like Obama.

"With the nuclear deal done, prisoners released, the time was right to resolve this dispute as well," President Barack Obama said at the White House on Jan. 17—without disclosing the \$400 million cash payment. Obama Inc. is insisting that the cash transfer is just an amazing coincidence that wasn't a ransom payment. Also he'd like to sell us the Brooklyn Bridge for a mere \$4 trillion.

Sen. Tom Cotton, a Republican from Arkansas and a fierce foe of the Iran nuclear deal, accused President Barack Obama of paying "a \$1.7 billion ransom to the ayatollahs for U.S. hostages." "This break with longstanding U.S. policy put a price on the head of Americans, and has led Iran to continue its illegal seizures" of Americans, he said.

Since the cash shipment, the intelligence arm of the Revolutionary Guard has arrested two more Iranian-Americans. Tehran has also detained dual-nationals from France, Canada and the U.K. in recent months. At the time of the prisoner release, Secretary of State John Kerry and the White House portrayed it as a diplomatic breakthrough. Mr. Kerry cited the importance of "the relationships forged and the diplomatic channels unlocked over the course of the nuclear talks."

Yes, hostage relationship unlocked. Iranian press reports have quoted senior Iranian defense officials describing the cash as a ransom payment.

And the best part is it was illegal...

The \$400 million was paid in foreign currency because any transaction with Iran in U.S. dollars is illegal under U.S. law. So Obama deliberately dodged the law by using foreign currency from foreign banks and hiding the smuggling operation from Americans.