

By Robert S. Dudley

On Bombing Iran

"When David Ben-Gurion declared the foundation of the state of Israel, was it done with American approval? When Levi Eshkol was forced to act in order to loosen the siege [of Israel] before 1967, was it done with the Americans' support? If someone sits here as the Prime Minister of Israel, and he can't take action on matters that are cardinal to the existence of this country, its future, and its security, and he is totally dependent on receiving approval from others, then he is not worthy of leading. I can make these decisions."—*Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, interview on Israel's Channel 2, as quoted in the New York Times, Nov. 5.*

China's First-Class Force

"This is the second entirely new fighter design that's emerged from China in the last two years, which suggests a pretty impressive level of technical development. ... [Beijing] has been extremely deliberate and well-funded and persistent, and it's starting to bear fruit. What you're now seeing since the early '90s is the slow emergence of a first-class regional military power."—*Sam Roggeveen, Lowy Institute in Sydney, Australia, on the maiden flight of China's J-31 fighter, Reuters, Nov. 2.*

The Lost Decades

"The reason the [current USAF] fleet is so decrepit is because, for the first 10 years after the Cold War ended, policymakers thought the United States was in an era of extended peace. Then it spent the next 10 years fighting an enemy with no air force and no air defenses. So airpower was neglected for 20 years, and today the Air Force reflects that fact."—*Loren B. Thompson, Lexington Institute, Associated Press, Nov. 4.*

Seeing the Invisible

"Uncritical support of all things martial is quickly becoming the new normal for our youth. Hardly any of my students at the Naval Academy remember a time when their nation wasn't at war. Almost all think it ordinary to hear of drone strikes in Yemen or Taliban attacks in Afghanistan. The recent revelation of counterterrorism bases in Africa elicits no surprise in them,

nor do the military ceremonies that are now regular features at sporting events. That which is left unexamined eventually becomes invisible, and as a result, few Americans today are giving sufficient consideration to the full range of violent activities the government undertakes in their names."—*Aaron B. O'Connell, assistant professor at United States Naval Academy, op-ed in the New York Times, Nov. 4.*

Problems of Assault ...

"Problems of sexual assault are getting worse, they're not getting better. Everything that has been tried has not worked."—*Secretary of the Air Force Michael B. Donley, San Antonio Express-News, Oct. 23.*

... and Leisure-Suit Larrys

"He said to me, 'It's Friday afternoon, why don't you take off your blouse and get comfortable?'"—*TSgt. Jennifer Smith, alleging misconduct on the part of a senior officer, New York Times, Nov. 2. Smith has filed a formal complaint.*

Not Yet, But It's Early

"When people ask, 'What kind of armament, what kind of weapons can this thing carry?' we basically say, 'Well, pretty much the US arsenal.' Granted, the air-to-air role isn't quite there yet."—*Col. Russell Hart, bomber operations chief at Air Force Global Strike Command, on the B-52 bomber, Air Force Times, Oct. 21.*

Morning in Mideast? No.

"We all agree that the Iranians are determined to turn into a military nuclear power. ... To tell you the truth, out of long experience of the Middle East, I am extremely skeptical about the chances that it [use of sanctions] will lead the ayatollahs to sit together at any point in the foreseeable future and decide to give up their intention to go in the footsteps of Pakistan and North Korea and turn into a military nuclear power. They think of themselves as a major regional power from the dawn of history. ... Don't misread me. We would love to wake up one morning and learn, against my expectations, the ayatollahs gave it up. I don't believe it will happen."—*Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, The Times (London), Oct. 31.*

Horse Holders?

"As the duties of the uniformed service Chiefs have converged with those of the civilian Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, the latter have become redundant appendages. Eliminating those positions would save money and streamline management. ... In the 1950s, the Army reexamined its table of organization and equipment. It found that an artillery battery contained one soldier whose presence and function were unexplained. The position was that of the man who, during combat, had held the horses that drew the caissons carrying the guns. The horses had gone, but not the personnel slot. Let's retire another set of horse holders."—*Harold Brown, Secretary of Defense 1977-1981 and Secretary of the Air Force 1965-1969, op-ed in the Washington Post, Oct. 18.*

Wobbly Air Dominance

"Our ability to design cutting-edge platforms ... is already atrophying [and the] potential for viable future competition in this area will shrink or be eliminated. ... Our technological advantage in this area will not endure unless we provide [to industry] a meaningful opportunity for leading-edge design, build, and test activities. ... We should have no preconceived notions about the nature of air dominance a few decades into the future."—*Internal memo written by Frank Kendall III, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, Bloomberg, Oct. 22.*

Cost of Neglect

"Anyone wondering what Afghanistan will look like if we abandon the war or draw down troops too rapidly should look to Iraq, where a residual force would almost certainly have halted the current re-emergence of al Qaeda. Or to Syria, where more moderate forces are being increasingly overrun by hard-line Islamists. Or to Yemen, where al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has carved out territory and an operational headquarters to plan attacks against America. Or to Libya, where the facts about Benghazi are still trickling out, but where we know that an al Qaeda-affiliated group was behind the deadly attack."—*Retired Army Gen. John M. Keane, former vice chief of staff, Wall Street Journal, Oct. 22.*