

By Robert S. Dudley

Iran, Anyone?

"The stealth and other advanced capabilities provided by this fifth generation [F-35] fighter are self-evident. Your options for attacking the enemy are much more numerous and practical. The things that we could do before will entail much less risk, and the things we might not have been able to do before will be rendered doable. It changes the psychology of the arena by allowing you to hit the enemy without him being able to stop you. ... It really is a game-changer and the enemy knows that."—*Major E. [full name withheld], an Israeli air force pilot selected to fly the F-35, defensenews.com, Sept. 5.*

The Big Upgrade?

"After a thorough review of data that was not available previously, ... we have concluded that this is one [recipient of an Air Force Cross] that is worthy of a relook for a potential Medal of Honor. We've looked at [six other airmen]; we think we have one. We've requested a representative [in Congress] to support that ... and we're going to try to move that one forward."—*Lt. Gen. Bradley A. Heithold, head of Air Force Special Operations Command, commenting on possible award of a Medal of Honor to an unidentified airman, Air Force Times, Aug. 31.*

Days of Future CAS

"The F-35's mission in the close air support arena will be to do high-threat close air support in a contested environment that the A-10 will not be able to survive in. That will be the role of the F-35, and it will not be able to do that until it's fully mission capable in our full operational capability at 2021 and beyond. So the idea that the F-35 is going to walk in the door next year [at] IOC and take over for the A-10 is just silly. It's never been our intent and we have never said that. And so that's not a plan. I would eventually—certainly like to have a capability that replaces the A-10 that does the low-threat CAS work in an even better way than the A-10 has been able to. I mean, we should be trying to get better as an Air Force. I'm worried about future CAS, not past CAS."—*Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, USAF Chief of Staff, Pentagon press briefing, Aug. 24.*

Connecting the Dots

"A foreign spy agency now has the ability to cross-check who has a security clearance—via the OPM [Office of Personnel Management] breach—with who was cheating on their wife—via the Ashley Madison breach—and thus identify someone to target for blackmail."—*Peter W. Singer, coauthor of Cybersecurity and Cyberwar, Los Angeles Times, Aug. 31.*

Airman Stone's Question

"Airman Stone, in the aisle seat, took off at a sprint toward the gunman, his two friends behind him. 'It felt like it took forever to get to him,' Airman Stone recalled. He could not figure out why he had not been shot yet. He said he kept expecting to feel a bullet rip into his torso. 'He's about to shoot me,' he thought as the gunman ... pointed the rifle at him. 'Why am I not dead yet?'"—*Excerpt from account of A1C Spencer Stone's rush to reach and subdue a terrorist aboard a French train, saving dozens of passengers, New York Times, Sept. 2.*

BUFFs and BONES

"Whether it's B-52 or B-1, we know Israel's military would need to expand its infrastructure. There are real questions about long-term life cycle costs of a long-range bomber and whether that's an investment Israel wants to make. But if Israel requests it [approval to acquire USAF long-rang bombers], I'd be favorably disposed."—*Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), chairman of Senate Armed Services AirLand subcommittee, defensenews.com, Sept. 2.*

McCain, Tanker: Together Again

"Delays to the [KC-46A tanker] program's internal deadlines for completing key qualification and planned ground and flight testing activities are indicative of a program at risk of not meeting its planned delivery milestones. ... All too often under our current defense acquisition system, the [Defense] Department has started programs that were poorly conceived or inherently unexecutable, with the aim of getting programs into development and production where they can become notoriously difficult to change meaningfully or, if necessary, terminate. The KC-46A program must

not become another such failure."—*Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), official statement on the tanker program, Aug. 31.*

Owning the Ayatollahs

"So [President Obama's US-Iran nuclear] deal will proceed, and Democrats had better hope it succeeds, because they are taking responsibility for Iran's compliance and imperial ambitions. Politically speaking, they now own the Ayatollahs. The Democratic co-owners include Vice President Joe Biden, presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton, and nearly every member of the congressional leadership. ... The Iran deal is one of those watershed foreign policy moments when history will remember where politicians stood. Mr. Obama has said as much by conceding that if Iran gets a nuclear weapon, 'it's my name on this.' By forming a partisan phalanx to let Mr. Obama overcome bipartisan opposition, Democrats have also put their names on it."—*Wall Street Journal house editorial, Sept. 2.*

Profit and Loss

"We should stop thinking about our people as a cost center but rather as a profit center. They're not an expense, they're an investment. ... It's harder than ever before to maintain a lasting technological superiority over our adversaries. But the thing that has always made us great and will continue to make us great is our people. ... That will be our lasting competitive advantage."—*Brad R. Carson, acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, discussing "Force of the Future" pay and benefit initiatives, militarytimes.com, Sept. 1.*

Check, Please

"[Russian President Vladimir Putin is] taking Russia in the wrong direction for his own people, but it seems that that's the direction he wants to take them, towards one of more confrontation, and we're simply going to have to check that, both on our own security interest and because we have important allies and friends in that part of the world, and we have important treaty commitments in the case of NATO."—*Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, remarks to Marines at Camp Pendleton, Calif.*