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To: "[REDACTED]"

Subject: Fw: The Media Line MidEast Daily

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From: MidEast Daily News <[REDACTED]>

To: [REDACTED]

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### Panetta, Israelis Talk about Military Option against Iranian Nukes

US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta spent Wednesday in Jerusalem discussing contingency plans for exercising the military option against Iranian nuclear sites. Following the sessions, local media reported that Israeli officials were pleased with the tenor of the talks, which began as an attempt by Panetta to convince the Israelis that there is still time for diplomacy and sanctions to work. He was reportedly adamant that the Obama administration is committed to preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons even if it ultimately requires the use of force. The Israelis reportedly reiterated that they would take no unilateral military action before the November elections in the United States. The two nations have been in close contact on the Iranian issue and are believed to be largely in-synch in approach. Most observers viewed the Panetta visit as having a political side as did the recent visit by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: to reiterate the closeness of the US-Israel relationship in advance of the election. The Clinton and Panetta trips sandwiched one by Republican contender Mitt Romney.

### Reuters: Obama Authorized CIA to Aid Syrian Rebels Short of Lethal Weaponry

President Obama has given the CIA a green light to provide non-lethal aid and support to the opposition army fighting the regime of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. According to the Reuters news agency, which broke the story, permission was made through an "intelligence finding" and has been in effect for awhile. Some observers have noted a perceived improvement in the fighting capabilities of the Free Syrian Army – the anti-Assad force comprised primarily of soldiers who defected from the Syrian army – in recent weeks. Turkey, which is taking the point in providing aid

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and support to Syrian rebels, is believed to be the conduit for assistance provided by the US and other Western nations. The FSA is now believed to be in possession of missiles that can be used against the Syrian attack helicopters that have been prominent in the fighting over the past week, although the source of the sophisticated weaponry is unknown. The measures apparently taken by President Obama are consistent with those utilized against former Libyan strongman Mu'amar Al-Qaddafi, although they are being introduced at a much slower pace. On Thursday, Syrian rebels used tanks commandeered from the army to bombard an airport from which the helicopters used against the opposition troops are being launched.

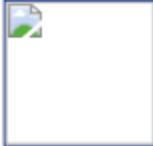
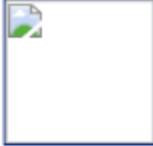
### **Netanyahu's Support Plummetts over Issues of Religious Draft, Tax Hikes**

Although no politician or political party is yet seen as a threat to topple the Netanyahu government, new polling indicates public support for the prime minister has plunged to the lowest point of his incumbency. The nose-dive is predicated on two issues of great sensitivity: the perception that he was manipulated by the religious right on the issue of applying the military draft equally to all sectors including the traditionally-exempt seminary students; and a new round of tax hikes at a time when the nation's attention is focused on socio-economic issues and the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor. Israel's value-added tax, which is applied to virtually all goods and services Israelis purchase, will increase to 17 per cent next month, while income taxes will also rise. Public angst toward Netanyahu as indicated by the poll carried out by the Dialog organization is exceeded by the anger directed at his finance minister, Yuval Steinitz, a political appointee who when tapped for the position was seen as having little expertise in finance. While Netanyahu's numbers have never fallen below a 54% approval rating since taking office in 2009, the new poll now places it at only 31% with 60% expressing dissatisfaction. For Steinitz, it was a paltry 19% approving and 67% dissatisfied. Several months ago, Netanyahu was willing to go to new elections based on the strength of his party and the lack of serious opposition. That idea quickly changed when he cut a deal with the failing Kadima party's chairman to create the largest coalition in history. But that super-sense of security lasted only 70 days before Kadima head Shaul Mofaz did yet another about-face and returned his party to opposition. Although one year remains before the next scheduled election, in the Israeli system of parliamentary democracy, the existing government can be dissolved by an act of parliament and new elections called at any time.

### **Thailand Establishes Diplomatic Relations with the State of Palestine**

The Palestinian Authority's Foreign Ministry announced on Wednesday that full diplomatic relations have been established with Thailand. Last January, Thailand extended recognition to the state of Palestine. In July, PA Foreign Minister Riad Al-Malki met with the Thai deputy foreign minister and full relations were agreed upon. The implementation of the agreement was fulfilled on Wednesday. A Palestinian embassy in Thailand is under construction.

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