



## The US and Us: The Mitvim-DC Monthly

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*The US and Us: The Mitvim-DC Monthly* is a monthly report on US-Middle East issues. Each report includes an analysis, a roundup of commentaries, and a profile of a major US policymaker. The series is of particular importance for Israel's regional foreign policies as the second Obama administration takes shape – a time in which personnel changes and policy re-evaluations regarding Israel and the Middle East are taking place.

#### **A. Analysis**

From the Benghazi report released this month, to speculations over the next Secretary of Defense, to Hillary Clinton's recent illness; December 2012 has been anything but tranquil for the Washington DC crowd.

The Benghazi hearings, chaired by former Ambassador Thomas Pickering and vice-chaired by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Michael Mullen, have found that the State Department was not adequately prepared in providing the necessary amounts of protection to the US mission in Libya. From an [unclassified report released](#) on the State Department's website, we can see that the hearing's conclusion was "that Congress must do its part to provide necessary resources to the State Department to address security risks and meet mission imperatives." In addition to calling on Congress to step up its commitment, the report also criticized existing State Department practices, noting that "the Department should enhance its ongoing efforts to significantly upgrade its language capacity, especially Arabic, among American employees."

Members of the Cabinet, as a practice, typically submit their letters of resignation following the President's second inauguration. It is done as a gesture of goodwill to the President, so that he can choose to retain or release the Cabinet official. With Obama's second inauguration approaching this January, many have speculated openly about the next potential Secretaries of Defense and State, as Secretary of Defense Panetta and Secretary of State Clinton have both expressed their desire to leave the post.

The talk on Obama's appointment for the Secretary of State position, John Kerry, has been sidelined for the time being while Clinton recovers from her blood clot and concussion. The discussion on the Secretary of Defense position, however, has been heating up. Chuck Hagel, a Republican from Nebraska, has been confirmed as Obama's nominee for the position. However, despite endorsements from former ambassadors such as Ryan Crocker, Hagel has had his fair share of opponents. Despite having a [career](#) as a friend of Israel, Hagel has been attacked by conservatives such as Bill Kristol over his support of Israel. Hagel's comment "I'm a senator of the US, not a senator of Israel" has not relieved him from any of the criticisms. Hagel's history as a Vietnam veteran and an outspoken opponent of military action in Iran are sure to bring an interesting perspective to the Pentagon, should he be confirmed.

## B. Article Roundup

### ***US-Israeli Relations***

The Washington Post's Editorial Board released an op-ed to start the New Year titled: "[Overheated rhetoric on Israeli settlements.](#)" In it, the authors warned against escalating the settlement issue further, specifically in light of the debate over the E-1 corridor.

[Writing in Open Zion](#), Peter Beinart discusses the criticism of Chuck Hagel and the accusations of anti-Semitism leveled against him. From Beinart: "In American punditry today, you can casually accuse a decorated war hero of bigotry against Jews or Israel secure in the knowledge that while the accusation may destroy his career, it will never imperil your own."

### ***US-Middle East Policy***

Joe Klein, in *Time*, [details what Obama's next foreign policy battle will be](#): the appointment of Chuck Hagel. This appointment, argues Klein, is liable to center around two issues: Israel and Iran.

This report, released by the Wilson Center, is titled "[Has the Arab Spring lived up to expectations?](#)" In it, it chronicles the progress made in year two of the Arab Spring, and addresses some major concerns for the US.

In a personnel shift, President Obama has a couple of vacancies on his National Security Council, one of which is the position of Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa. [The Washington Post highlights two possible replacements.](#)

## C. Policy Profile

### ***John Kerry, nominee for Secretary of State***

John Kerry is well known to observers of US politics, but with his coming confirmation sessions for the position of Secretary of State, it is important to get caught up with what he brings to the table. Kerry, who ran for president in 2004, is a Vietnam veteran and the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee. A vocal opponent of the Iraq War, Kerry's past suggests his tenure in Foggy Bottom will be averse to conflict. Here are [five other things to know about the potential next Secretary of State](#) and [five tips on Israel given to him by Nadav Eyal](#).

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