

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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IRAN TESTED NEW MISSILE DURING SUMMIT'

December 12, 2007 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Iran tested a newly-developed ballistic missile on the day of the Annapolis conference, Channel 10 reported Wednesday. The Ashoura missile has a range of 2,000 kilometers and is capable of reaching Israel, US Army bases in the Middle East and eastern European cities.

According to the report, the new missile is an improvement to the existing Shihab-3 missile. The Ashoura uses solid fuel instead of the Shihab's liquid fuel, giving it a significantly faster launch sequence which is harder to detect.

Iranian Defense Minister Gen. Mostafa Muhammad-Najjar had announced the development of the new missile on the day of the summit, but had not specified whether it had actually been tested.

According to the country's IRNA news agency, Najjar said the missile was named the "Ashoura," meaning "the tenth day" in Farsi - a sacred reference among Shi'ite Muslims to the martyrdom of the third imam. The Iranian defense minister said that "the production of the new missile was one of the Defense Ministry's greatest achievements."

Analysts believe much of Iran's military production has benefited from assistance from Russia, China and other countries, but many of their weapons development claims have not been independently verified.

Recent weapons development has been motivated by Iran's standoff with the US over its controversial nuclear program. The Shihab-3, which means "shooting star" in Farsi, has a range of at least 1,300 kilometers. In 2005, Iranian officials said they had improved the range of the Shihab-3 to 2,000 kilometers, a range equal to that of the new missile reported Wednesday.

Experts also believe Iran is developing the Shihab-4 missile, thought to have a range between 2,000 and 3,000 kilometers that would put much of Europe in range."

BUSH TO TAKE 'HANDS-ON' PEACE TALK ROLE

December 12, 2007 The Jerusalem Post reported "US President George W. Bush is set to take a more active role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, his top diplomat said in an interview transcript released Wednesday.

US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice told *USA Today* Bush would be visiting the region because "he very much wants to signal support for the bilateral process between the parties and to continue in a hands-on way to encourage them to move forward."

Still, she described that approach as not one that says, "All right, I'm going to go ahead and fix this for you," but one emphasizing talking to the parties, in which "he'll be able to get a strong sense of where the points of convergence are that maybe they won't see, and where the points of divergence are as well."

Rice cited Bush's role at the recent Annapolis conference in which Israel-Palestinian negotiations were formally relaunched. At Annapolis, Bush pledged to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that the US would be "actively engaged" and help the parties.

Until now, Bush has taken a low-key approach to peacemaking, delegating authority to Rice. While she has visited Israel eight times this year to facilitate negotiations, Bush will be making his first official trip when he comes in January.

In the interview, Rice declined to provide further specifics on Bush's itinerary, saying there would be further diplomatic movement before the trip takes place. But she did acknowledge that there would be other stops in the region, in part because the United States sees broader Arab backing as crucial for the effort.

"The Palestinians can't make those tough choices without Arab support," Rice said, "and the Israelis, I think, will have a hard time taking those tough choices unless they know that this is really going to be an end to the conflict more broadly than just with the Palestinians, and that a comprehensive peace is really possible."

The Bush administration has faulted former president Bill Clinton's administration for not having greater involvement from the surrounding Arab states as one of the reasons the Oslo process didn't succeed."..."

REPORT: IRANIAN OPPOSITION GROUP SAYS TEHRAN DID NOT HALT NUKE PROGRAM

December 11, 2007 Ha`aretz.com reported: "Iran did shut down its nuclear weapons program in 2003 but restarted it a year later, dispersing the equipment to thwart international inspectors, an overseas Iranian opposition group told the Wall Street Journal. The group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), exposed the country's nuclear-fuel program in 2002 and now believes a recent U.S. Analysis is giving the wrong impression that Iran's nuclear program is not an urgent threat, the newspaper reported on Tuesday.

The U.S. National Intelligence Estimate published last week said Iran's weapons program was frozen in 2003, contradicting an earlier report that the Islamic Republic was determined to build a nuclear bomb.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert disagreed, saying Israel believes Iran will have the resources to create a nuclear weapon by 2010. But the estimate dampened any enthusiasm among Russia and China for more UN sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, which Tehran says is for peaceful purposes.

The NCRI, listed by the United States and the European Union as a terrorist organization, has had a mixed record of accuracy with its nuclear claims about Iran, the Journal said. The NCRI does agree that Iran's Supreme National Security Council decided to shut down its most important nuclear weapons research center in eastern Tehran, called Lavisan-Shian, in August 2003, the Journal said.

But the group, which claims it has sources inside Iran, said the facility had entered 11 fields of research, including projects to develop a nuclear trigger and shape weapons-grade uranium into a warhead, the paper said.

"They scattered the weaponization program to other locations and restarted in 2004," Mohammad Mohaddessin, the NCRI's foreign affairs chief, told the Journal.

"Their strategy was that if the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) found any one piece of this research program, it would be possible to justify it as civilian. But so long as it was all together, they wouldn't be able to."

By the time international inspectors were allowed to visit the Lavisan site, the buildings Iran claimed were devoted to nuclear research had been torn down and the ground bulldozed, the paper said.

The NCRI said the equipment was moved to another military compound known as the Center for Readiness and Advanced Technology, to Malek-Ashtar University Isfahan and to a defense ministry hospital in Tehran."...

Officials from the United States, France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China will hold talks on Tuesday on finalizing the text of a third UN sanctions resolution against Iran, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on Monday."..."

JERUSALEM TO BE DIVIDED, DECLARES ISRAELI OFFICIAL

December 10, 2007 WorldNetDaily reported: "A top member of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's government today announced Israel "must" give up sections of Jerusalem for a future Palestinian state, even conceding the Palestinians can rename Jerusalem "to whatever they want."

"We must come today and say, friends, the Jewish neighborhoods, including Har Homa, will remain under Israeli sovereignty, and the Arab neighborhoods will be the Palestinian capital, which they will call Jerusalem or whatever they want," said Israeli Vice Premier Haim Ramon.

Positions held by Ramon, a ranking member of Olmert's Kadima party, are largely considered to be reflective of Israeli government policy. Ramon's statements follow last month's U.S.-sponsored Annapolis summit at which Olmert committed to aim at completing negotiations by next year to create a Palestinian state, with Israel expected to evacuate swaths of Jerusalem and the strategic West Bank.

Ramon said due to the city's demographics, Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem "should not be under Israeli sovereignty, because they pose a threat to Jerusalem being the capital of a Jewish Israel."

About 231,000 Arabs live in Jerusalem, mostly in eastern neighborhoods. The city has an estimated total population of 724,000. Ramon listed population statistics as the reason Olmert's government finds it necessary to split Jerusalem.



Last week...according to Jerusalem municipal employees, during 10 years as mayor of Jerusalem, Olmert instructed city workers not to take action against hundreds of illicit Arab building projects throughout eastern sections of Jerusalem housing over 100,000 Arabs squatting in the city illegally."..."

CENTRAL BANKS PUMPING BILLIONS INTO WORLD FINANCIAL SYSTEM

December 12, 2007 International Herald Tribune reported: "Central banks in Europe and North America moved Wednesday to increase the amount of money they could lend to banks and to make it more readily available in an attempt to ease the credit squeeze.

It was the first time since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and on the Pentagon that these central banks have coordinated their support of financial markets. Stock markets rose in Europe and the Americas after the announcement by the U.S. Federal Reserve, the Bank of Canada, the European Central Bank, the Bank of England and the Swiss National Bank.

In the United States, the Standard & Poor's 500-stock index made up nearly half of its losses from Tuesday, when stocks fell after the Fed cut interest rates modestly, but then dipped, closing up 8.94 points at 1,486.59. The Dow Jones Stoxx 600, a broad measure of European markets, rose 1.20 points to close at 374.75.

Fed officials said the united move was an effort to improve financial markets, not a response to problems at any individual bank."..."

Economists and market specialists welcomed the Fed's intervention but expressed some skepticism whether it would be enough to allay the biggest problems in the credit markets related to the sharp drop in the value of U.S. mortgage securities."..."

*Compiled by L. Jim Tuck, Pastor
UCGIA Oakland, San Jose, and Santa Rosa
ljt5053@sbcglobal.net*