

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

FEBRUARY 5, 2005

INFIGHTING REPORTED WITH SYRIAN SECURITY

February 3, 2005 The Middle East Newslite reported: "Syrian opposition sources have reported fighting within the security services under the regime of President Bashar Assad.

The Reform Party of Syria said the infighting was prompted by the appointment of Brig. Gen. Ghazi Kanaan as Syrian interior minister in mid-2004. The group, supported by the U.S. Defense Department as a democratic alternative to the Assad regime, said Kanaan was provided a mandate to unify the rival intelligence services.

Quoting "reliable sources in the Middle East," RPS said that since Kanaan entered the Interior Ministry, Syria's security and intelligence services, including military intelligence services, "have been at each other throats for control."

"The in-fighting is almost at a point of spilling of blood," RPS said. RPS said Assad's brother-in-law, Assaf Chawkat, regarded as the liaison to the security agencies, had opposed their consolidation. The group said Defense Minister Hassan Turkmani also opposed the move out of concern that he would lose his authority..."

POSSIBLE HUMAN TRANSMISSION OF BIRD FLU RAISES NEW CONCERNS

February 1, 2005 The Voice of America reported: "The latest spate of deaths from bird flu in Vietnam is raising fears that the disease is re-emerging after last year's outbreak in 10 Asian countries. This time, however, there is a new, more ominous concern: A recent medical study reports the first case of bird flu transmission among humans.

A report in The New England Journal of Medicine documents a probable case of person-to-person transmission of the avian flu virus in Thailand. Previous cases were traced to contact with infected poultry. In this instance, investigators from the Thai Health Ministry and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control say an 11-year-old girl died after exposure to a sick chicken, but her mother and aunt, who had no such bird exposure, also became ill, suggesting that human transmission occurred. The mother also died.

The president of the vaccine division of the big U.S. pharmaceutical company Merck, Adel Mahmoud, says the new report is a sign of the virus' potential to trigger a global flu outbreak. "That is just a very, very serious warning sign that viruses are recombining, moving from avian to animals to humans and then being transmitted within the human population," he said.

Continuing spread of bird flu between people is the worst fear of public health experts. The World Health Organization's representative in Hanoi, Hans Troedsson, says this would mean that the virus has genetically altered to a form much more easily transmitted. "The major concern we have is, of course, that the virus will change or alter, but we have no indication of that yet," he said. "The other concern we have would be a dramatic increase in the number of cases even if the virus has not changed, because that would put a lot of additional pressure on the existing health care services."

The fact that no further human bird flu transmission occurred in Thailand suggests to experts that the virus has not mutated and is still completely avian. Yet in a New England Journal of Medicine commentary, University of Michigan School of Public Health professor Arnold Monto expresses concern that mutation is only a matter of time. He writes that, given the continued outbreaks of this disease in Asia, the question is when such changes will happen."

EU FIRMS SHY AWAY FROM IRAN

February 1, 2005 Middle East Newslite reported: "European firms, fearing a loss of their U.S. market, have shied away from signing major contracts with Iran.

European industry sources said British, French and German majors have refused the appeals by their governments to negotiate major contracts with Iran as part of an effort to woo Teheran away from the construction of nuclear weapons. The sources said these companies fear loss of their U.S. market upon signing any agreement with Teheran.

"The EU has been too late," an industry source said. "The Americans have already warned European majors to keep out of Iran, or else."

U.S. officials have confirmed that the Bush administration warned leading European companies of sanctions if they sign major deals with Iran. The officials said the administration wants to ensure a permanent halt in Iranian uranium enrichment and full International Atomic Energy Agency access to suspected nuclear facilities before easing a ban on trade with Teheran..."

AL QAEDA VOWS TO FIGHT ON IN IRAQ

February 1, 2005 Reuters reported: "Al Qaeda vowed to pursue "holy war" in Iraq Monday after failing to wreck elections, and Prime Minister Iyad Allawi urged rival ethnic and religious groups to unite after the first multi-party vote in 50 years. Al Qaeda Islamist militants denounced the historic elections Sunday as an "American game" but leaders around the world hailed the vote as an unexpected success, regardless of whether they had supported or opposed the U.S.-led war in 2003.

War opponents France, Germany and Russia all hailed Iraqis' bravery in voting and, in a sign of warming transatlantic ties, pledged to back U.S. efforts to restore stability.

But the al Qaeda group in Iraq, whose leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi had threatened voters with death in a bid to wreck the election, said it would pursue its war against U.S.-led occupying forces and Iraqis working with them. "We in the al Qaeda Organization for Holy War in Iraq will continue the jihad until the banner of Islam flutters over Iraq," said the statement posted on an Islamist Web site.

A videotape Monday purported to show insurgents downing a British military transport plane with a missile near Baghdad in a crash Sunday that killed 10 people -- Britain's worst single death toll of the war. The video, aired by an Arabic TV channel and issued by the 1920 Revolution Brigades, showed an explosion then smoldering debris of what looked like a plane, including an engine, on the ground and filmed at close range in a large field.

Analysts said the wreckage on the video looked authentic but the first part -- shots of a button being pressed and a rocket streaking off skyward -- was less convincing...."

CHINA PRODUCES MISSILES FOR IRAN

January 30, 2005 The Middle East Newline reported: "China has launched marketing of missiles designed for Iran. China's Hongdu Aviation Industry Group has exhibited three variants of two new guided missiles that were designed and developed for Iran. The anti-ship missiles, displayed at the China Air Show 2004 in November 2004, were identified as the JJ/TL-6B, JJ/TL-10A and KJ/TL-10B.

Industry sources said the Chinese missiles are identical to Iran's Nasr and Kosar, also known as the TL-6 and TL-10. They said brochures by the state-owned Iran Aerospace Industries Organization contain photographs of the Iranian missiles that were identical to those exhibited in China.

"It is now clear that two missile programmes revealed a few years ago by China National Aero Technology Import & Export Co (CATIC) - the FL-8 and FL-9 - were the TL-10 and TL-6, respectively, under yet another name," the London-based Jane's Defence Weekly reported..."

'MAD COW' DISEASE FOUND IN GOAT

January 29, 2005 BBC News reported: "A French goat has tested positive for mad cow disease - the first animal in the world other than a cow to have bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The European Commission says further testing will be done to see if the incidence is an isolated one.

The animal, which was slaughtered in 2002, was initially thought to have scrapie, a similar brain-wasting condition sometimes seen in goats. But British scientists have now confirmed the disease was in fact BSE.

More than 100 people in the UK have died from vCJD (variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease), the human form of BSE, after eating tainted beef. But the EC stressed on Friday that precautionary measures put in place in recent years to protect the human food chain from contaminated meats meant there was no need for alarm over the latest finding.

Markos Kyprianou, EU Commissioner responsible for Health and Consumer Protection, said: "I want to reassure consumers that existing safety measures in the EU offer a very high level of protection.

This case was discovered thanks to the EU testing system in place in France. "The testing programme has shown us that there is a very low incidence rate of TSEs (transmissible spongiform encephalopathies) in goats and allowed us to detect suspect animals so that they can be taken out of the food chain, as was done with this goat and its entire herd."..."

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