

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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RUSSIA WORKING ON 'DEFENSE-PROOF' NUCLEAR MISSILES: MINISTER

March 1, 2005 Agency France-Press reported: "Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said Tuesday that Moscow was creating a nuclear weapon capable of thwarting any defense system in the world, Interfax news agency reported. "There is not now and will not be any defense from such missiles," the news agency quoted Ivanov as saying.

It was not immediately clear what type of weapon Ivanov was referring to. He has however said in the past that Russia's future nuclear defenses will be based on the mobile, Topol-M rocket. Ivanov said also that Russia was now focusing its attention on the Baluva, a sea-based strategic missile model that can be armed with a nuclear warhead. Russia currently stores most of its heaviest, intercontinental ballistic Topol-M missiles in silos.

Ivanov has been charged with streamlining Russia's Soviet era nuclear defenses, relying more heavily on a small range of powerful weapons as thousands of old missiles become decommissioned. "We will not be baking rockets like cakes as we did in the Soviet era," Ivanov was quoted as saying.

Russia has said on repeated occasions that it was developing missiles capable of penetrating the missile defense shield being developed by the United States, whose construction Moscow had furiously opposed. Analysts have suggested that Russia is developing a missile which can "zigzag" while in flight and thereby dodge anti-missile defenses."

SYRIA'S BLOODY PLANS FOR LEBANON 'RETREAT'

March 1, 2005 WorldNetDaily.com reported: "While Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is telling the world his military forces will leave Lebanon, a political shakeup in Damascus signals his army won't be leaving without a fight. With increasing international diplomatic pressure to withdraw troops, as well as a mounting popular uprising in Lebanon, Assad has appointed a family member to the No. 1 intelligence post and given him sweeping new powers meant to maintain the Assad dynasty at any cost.

It was the threat of a Lebanon crisis, sparked by the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, that prompted Assad's sister, Bushara Chawkat to approach her brother with a plan of ascension for her husband. She requested him to grant more authority to her husband, Assaf Chawkat, so that they would be able to avoid an end to their family dynasty begun with the rise to power of their father, Hafez al-Assad, in 1969.

Like others close to the president, Bushara Chawkat, a powerful background player in Syrian politics, is worried that a retreat from Lebanon will signal the end of the Assad regime. They are feeling the pressure of eroding U.S.-Syria relations over the death of Hariri, for which Damascus is widely believed responsible, as well as allegations Syria is holding sensitive Iraqi weapon systems sent there by Saddam Hussein prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In addition, Syria is believed to be supporting terrorists in Iraq.

The 54-year-old Gen. Assaf Chawkat has long been responsible for maintaining close ties with Hezbollah, monitoring and controlling its activities and connections with Iran. He has also entrusted with the highly secretive Assad financial issues. According to various intelligence agencies the family has accumulated over the years close to \$4 billion stashed in a web of bank accounts in almost every continent.

Chawkat immediately took steps to assure Iran regarding the future of Hezbollah should Syria be forced to move out of Lebanon. General Chawkat is a firm believer in the use of force and in using the Hezbollah as a tool to settle certain Syrian political or military scores. He also gave the Iranians verbal assurances Damascus would not restrain Hezbollah should the U.S. or Israel attack Iran's nuclear assets..."

UN STRESSES NO DEADLINE TO SYRIAN PULLOUT

February 28, 2005 The Middle East Newline reported: "The United Nations has stressed that it has not set a deadline for a withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. A spokesman said UN secretary general Kofi Annan has called for a Syrian troop withdrawal from Lebanon. But spokesman Fred Eckhard said that contrary to published reports Annan did not set an April 2005 deadline.

"The secretary-general never set an April deadline for a withdrawal nor did he support sanctions if the pullout didn't happen by then," Eckhard said. Earlier, Annan was said to have asserted that he would report to the Security Council in April unless Syrian withdrew all of its troops from Lebanon. Syria was said to have about 14,000 troops in Lebanon..."

N KOREA MAKES MISSILE TEST THREAT

March 3, 2005 BBC News reported: "North Korea has said it is no longer observing a self-imposed moratorium on long-range missile testing which has been in place since 1999. The statement, which was issued late on Wednesday, was played down by the US and Japanese governments.

A Japanese foreign ministry spokesman said he thought North Korea might be trying to raise the stakes ahead of a possible resumption of nuclear talks. The North last launched a missile that grabbed the world's attention in 2003.

The statement, in a commentary carried by state news agency KCNA, said the moratorium on long-term missile testing was announced while US-North Korean dialogue was under way, but that since that dialogue was now suspended, so was the test ban. "We are not bound to the moratorium on the missile launch at present," it said..."

NEW RETROVIRUSES JUMP FROM MONKEYS TO HUMANS

March 1, 2005 NewScientist.com reported: "Two new retroviruses - the type of virus which causes AIDS - have jumped from non-human primates to people, a new study reveals. The study of blood samples from nearly a thousand bushmeat hunters or handlers in Cameroon showed that at least six viruses had crossed from monkeys to the people who were exposed to freshly caught bushmeat. And two of these viruses have never been seen before in humans.

The newly discovered human T-cell lymphotropic virus 3 (HTLV-3) and HTLV-4 are closely related to the known viruses, HTLV-1 and HTLV-2. These are implicated in cancers like leukaemia and can cause inflammatory or neurological diseases. Retroviruses such as HTLV or HIV insert their genetic material into a host cell's DNA. The emergence of HIV is widely blamed on a primate retrovirus, SIV, jumping to humans. Previously, it was thought that the emergence of these viruses was limited by the rarity of successful cross-species transmission.

But the identification of two entirely new human retroviruses from one study, along with a previous discovery by the same group that simian foamy viruses can jump from monkeys to humans, may be ominous..."

AIN'T GONNA REST ON SATURDAY

February 28, 2005 Arutz-7 News reported: "The Iraqi government's decision to make Saturday a day off has sparked much protest as Iraqis object to the observance of what they call "the Zionist holiday."

The Iraqi government decided last week that in order to make up for the additional day off, the traditional six-hour Iraqi workday would be extended. Many Iraqis went to work on Saturday anyway, saying they did not want to rest on the day when the Jews rest. They are demanding that the additional day off be Thursday instead.

A statement released by the student union at Baghdad's Mustansariyah University described the government order as forcing "the Zionist holiday" upon Iraqis. The statement also said the decision had been made by an interim Iraqi government, and not the permanent one. "We declare a general strike in the University of Mustansariyah, to reject this decision and any decision aimed at depriving Iraqis of their identity," the statement said.

In Samarra, one of the four Islamic holy cities, almost 80 miles north of Baghdad, a group of armed men forced the Mutawakal high school to open, threatening to kill the school's teachers if they took the day off. Students chanting "We don't want Saturday, it's a Jewish holiday" marched through the town of Baqouba, northeast of Baghdad..."

BIN LADEN ASKS ZARQAWI TO MAKE U.S. A TARGET

March 1, 2005 Reuters reported: "Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden has fairly recently asked his chief ally in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, to consider the territory of United States as a target for terrorist attacks, a U.S. counterterrorism official said on Monday.

"There has been communication between bin Laden and Zarqawi with bin Laden suggesting to Zarqawi the U.S. homeland as a target," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The official said the communication was "a fairly recent development" and contained no specific threat to the United States. But the official declined to provide details for fear of compromising U.S. anti-terrorism efforts.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has warned state officials around the country that the government had received nonspecific information about al Qaeda's plans to attack the United States..."