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ISRAEL TO STRIKE SYRIA?

September 2, 2004 WorldNetDaily reported: An Israeli leader warned Syria yesterday that Damascus bears the blame for a double suicide bombing by Hamas militants because it harbors the group's leadership, and also hinted at possible retaliation and increased targeting of Hamas leaders.

In an initial response to Tuesday's attack that killed 16 people in a southern Israeli city, Israeli troops blew up the home of one of the bombers and isolated the West Bank city of Hebron, where the attackers lived. But several Israeli officials told WorldNetDaily the Jewish state must send a strong message to Syria, which openly allows Khalid Meshel, the overall Hamas leader, to operate from Damascus.

"The fact that Hamas is operating from Syria will not grant it immunity," said Sharon spokesperson Raanan Gissin.

The Israeli army chief, Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon, said those who support terrorism "cannot sleep quietly at night," mentioning Palestinian leaders, Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas, Syria and Iran.

Sharon added his own implied threat: "Israel's struggle against terrorism will continue unabated. We will apparently need to decide on additional steps to stop terrorism." He did not elaborate.

Syria's ambassador to the United Nations, Faysel Mekdad, told WorldNetDaily his country does not harbor terrorists. "The different Palestinian organizations have information offices in Damascus," he said. "These factions do not carry out military actions from Syria and are not getting any support from Syria. They are part and parcel of the Palestinian people."

When informed it's well-known Meshel is involved in planning terrorism, Mekdad said, "How can a leader in Syria or other Arab countries that I don't want to mention, orient or make military operations somewhere else? I mean neither logistically nor financially nor from the communications point of view can he do anything like this."

Last Oct. 5, Israeli planes attacked the training camp of another militant group, Islamic Jihad, outside Damascus, a day after a female suicide bomber blew up a restaurant in the Israeli port city of Haifa, killing 21 people. But while Israel and Syria are bitter enemies, the air strike was a rare act of violence.

Israel has held Syria's government partly responsible for years of Hezbollah raids from southern Lebanon and has often threatened Syria. In practice, however, the Israelis hesitate to provoke a conflict with Syria, and their border has been calm for decades.

Security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said Israel would target local Hamas leaders and step up military patrols in the southern West Bank. "The policy now is to hit Hamas leaders wherever they are," said a senior Israeli security source...≡

CALL FOR EU FLAG IN NEXT OLYMPICS

September 3, 2004 The EUobserver reported: Romano Prodi has called for athletes from the EU member states to display the EU flag as well as their own national flag in the next Olympic Games, to be held in Beijing in 2008. In a statement, Mr Prodi said, "In 2008 I hope to see the EU member state teams in Beijing carry the flag of the European Union alongside their own national flag as a symbol of our unity".

And in a tongue-in-cheek press conference, Mr Prodi's spokesman claimed that the EU had "swept the floor" in the Games, which ended in Athens yesterday (29 August). Brussels calculated that the 25 EU member states between them carried off 286 medals, with 82 golds. "For the sake of comparison, the United States of America won 35 gold medals and 103 medals in total, with China and Russia behind them (the United States)", added the spokesman.

Germany in fact topped the EU "medals table" with 14 golds and 48 medals in total. The Germans were in 6th place in the overall table, just ahead of fellow EU members France and Italy (7th and 8th respectively). The UK was 10th, with 30 medals including nine gold medals.

However, if you take into account the relative size of the Olympic teams, the EU maybe has fewer grounds to celebrate. The US team comprised 1418 athletes in the various disciplines, according to the official Athens 2004 website. This is less than a quarter of the combined total of the EU 25, who sent 6298 athletes to compete in the games.≡

CLONING FROM THE DEAD CLAIM ATTACKED

[September 1, 2004](#) NewScientist.com reported: AViable embryos have been created from dead people by fusing their cells with empty cow eggs, a controversial fertility scientist claimed on Tuesday.

Panayiotis Zavos, of the Kentucky Center for Reproductive Medicine, Lexington, US, say his team has shown that cells taken from humans after death could be used for cloning. This latest work is purely experimental and no embryos were implanted for cloning, said Zavos, announcing the results at his own press conference in London, UK.

However, the claims were immediately met with both revulsion and scepticism from the UK scientific community. The work is both scientifically questionable and ethically unacceptable, says Richard Gardner of the UK Royal Society's working group on stem cell research and cloning. It is grossly misleading to suggest that you can replicate a loved one by producing a cloned person with the same genetic material.

This man preys on the strong desires of the most vulnerable people in society - giving them false hopes, says Robin Lovell-Badge, head of developmental genetics at the UK's National Institute for Medical Research. Other scientists argue that, even if cloning a person were possible, the risk of major birth defects is huge.

We have yet to see any proper description of any of the procedures that Dr Zavos claims to be able to use. He should publish his research in a recognised journal to prove that he is not a charlatan," says Lovell-Badge.

The UK's regulatory body, the Human Embryology and Fertilisation Authority, refused to comment on Zavos's latest work without it being peer-reviewed. Zavos says he has published a paper on earlier work in *Reproductive Bio Medicine Online* and that other papers are currently being reviewed.

In the latest work, Zavos claims to have taken live cells from the tissues of three dead people, injected them into cow eggs stripped of their nuclei and then fused them using electrical stimulation.

The successfully fused embryos begin to cleave after 48 hours, says Zavos, dividing into a small ball of cells. Two of the three human cells produced viable embryos which could have been implanted in an attempt to produce a pregnancy, he says...

EUROPEAN SECURITY DEPENDS ON PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

[August 30, 2004](#) EUobserver reported: A German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has underlined the importance of a European Union role, alongside that of the United States, in working out solutions to conflicts in the Middle East.

Mr Fischer is currently on a five-nation Middle East tour taking him to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt. Speaking at a news conference in Amman with Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Moasher on Sunday (29 August), the German Foreign Minister said: "When we talk of our security as Europeans, we are talking about the future of our neighbours in the Middle East". "If things are going badly wrong in the region, it will hurt our interests immediately and security immediately", he told reporters.

Mr Fischer also warned on Sunday against any Iranian nuclear arms build-up. He said an Iranian nuclear challenge only adds to the Middle East problems which include bringing security and stability to post-war Iraq, resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and introducing democratic reforms. "It would be a nightmare for the region if there'd be the beginning of an arms race - a nuclear arms race - in the region", he said and called on Iran to work closely with the European Union to resolve its impasse with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Mr Fischer will tomorrow travel (31 August) to Jerusalem for talks with Israeli officials and then he will head to Egypt. Ahead of his visit to Israel, the Palestinian Prime Minister, Ahmad Qurei, has stressed the need for the European Union to take a clear cut firm stance "towards the Israeli settlement expansion". The Palestinians are also hoping for German assistance in stopping Israel constructing the wall in and through the West Bank, the Palestine News Agency (WAFA) reported. Meanwhile, Israeli Foreign Minister Sylvan Shalom has appealed to Europe not to support any eventual Palestinian UN resolution aimed at sanctions or boycotts against the Jewish state over its security barrier.

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