



PROPHETIC TIMES

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TURKEY'S DEFENCE CHIEFS ASSESS 'SERIOUS' COUP PLOT

February 23, 2010 AFP reported: "Turkish prosecutors will on Wednesday question some of the suspects arrested over an alleged military coup plot, as US and European Union officials expressed concern over the affair.

The accused will also be brought before a judge to face possible charges over the alleged plot, which investigators say was designed to topple the Islamist-rooted government, the Anatolia news agency reported. Police detained more than 40 suspects Monday over a purported plan codenamed "Operation Sledgehammer" which dated back to 2003.



Turkey

The alleged plot was aimed at bringing down the Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) administration.

Seventeen retired generals and four active-duty admirals were among those detained on charges of "attempting to remove the government through force and violence" and brought for questioning in Istanbul, reports said. The country's defence chiefs held a crisis meeting Tuesday to discuss the affair.

The suspects allegedly planned to bomb mosques and escalate tensions with Greece in a bid to force the downing of a Turkish jet, thus destabilising the government and forcing its downfall.

Both US and EU officials on Tuesday stressed that the investigation be carried out following due process."..."

CHINA VOWS SANCTIONS AGAINST US COMPANIES WILL GO FORWARD

February 23, 2010 VOAnews.com reported: "The rift between China and the United States looks far from healing as Beijing reiterates its plan to punish U.S. companies following disagreements between the two countries. Beijing's anger at Washington over a range of issues from arms sales to Taiwan and the U.S. president's meeting with Tibet's exiled leader the Dalai Lama, showed no signs of abating Tuesday.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang reaffirmed punitive sanctions against American companies would go ahead, because of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. In addition, China is angry over U.S. positions on a number of issues, including trade, human rights and allegations of Chinese cyber-attacks on U.S. organizations.

He says it is up to the United States to heal relations.

Qin says that China demands that the U.S. seriously regard China's position and take credible measures to undo the damage done. And, he says, sanctions against U.S. companies will go ahead. Qin refused, however, to say when sanctions would come into effect.

Washington also is concerned about how China will react on international issues such as efforts to halt nuclear programs in North Korea and Iran."..."

CHINA EXTENDS POSITION AS WORLD'S LEADING FOOD PRODUCER

February 25, 2010 Reuters reported: "China extended its position as the world's leading food producer in 2008, when its agricultural production jumped 30%, measured by value, World Trade Organization data show.

Chinese farm production rose to \$759,94 billion in 2008, the latest year for which figures are available, from \$584,25 billion in 2007, according to a note by the WTO secretariat, circulated on the WTO website and dated February 23.

China is one of the few WTO members to have provided data for 2008.

The latest figure for the 27-member European Union's food output is \$248,69 billion in 2000, the year China overtook it with \$268,15 billion. Figures from some individual EU members suggest the EU may have regained the lead a year or so later only for China to pull ahead again conclusively by mid-decade.

US agricultural production was \$311,23 billion in 2007, the latest year for which data are available, up from \$246,57 billion in 2006 - China was already ahead of the US in 1995 when the WTO series starts.

Because the figures measure the value not the volume of agricultural production, they say nothing about the 2008 food crisis which led to riots in several countries by poor consumers hit by a surge in prices combined with shortages of some staples."

CONCERNS GROW OVER CHINA'S SALE OF US BONDS

February 25, 2010 Telegraph.co.uk reported: "Evidence is mounting that Chinese sales of US Treasury bonds over recent months are intended as a warning shot to Washington over escalating political disputes rather than being part of a routine portfolio shift as thought at first.

A front-page story in the state's China Information News said the record \$34bn sale of US bonds in December was a 'commendable' move. The article was republished by the National Bureau of Statistics, giving it a stronger imprimatur.

It follows a piece last week in *China Daily*, the Politburo's voice, citing an official from the Chinese Academy of Sciences praising the move to 'slash' holdings of US debt. This was published on the same day that US President Barack Obama received the Dalai Lama at the White House, defying protests from Beijing.

'There are ongoing spats between the US and China on so many fronts so you have to assume that this is some sort of implicit threat,' said Neil Mellor, a currency expert at the Bank of New York Mellon, who cautioned that it can be hard to read the complex signals from China.

'We still think China will have to continue buying US Treasuries by the bucket load. Where else can they invest in a liquid market. The euro has become a tarnished currency,' he said.

China's power is growing so fast that it now feels confident enough to raise the stakes on a string of festering conflicts with the US. It has threatened to impose sanctions on any US firm that takes part in a \$6.4bn arms deal for Taiwan agreed by the White House. This is a tougher response than on any previous occasion and raises the spectre of a trade war over Boeing, the key supplier.

'Chinese leaders are deploying their reserves to try and pressure the US to stop haranguing China about its currency and trade policies, and to back off from interference in its domestic issues,' said professor Eswar Prasad, ex-head of the IMF's China division.

Stephen Jen from BlueGold Capital said China is probably moving out of bonds from many countries as it prepares for a likely 5pc revaluation of its currency in coming weeks. Other assets might prove better protection against an immediate loss on holdings."..."



VENEZUELA REJECTS REPORT CITING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

February 25, 2010 The Associated Press reported: "Venezuela disputed on Thursday a hemispheric group's report citing human rights violations and political repression under the government of socialist President Hugo Chavez.

Local rights activists, conversely, applauded the 300-page account issued by the human rights committee of the Organization of American States, saying it sheds light on widespread rights violations the international community has largely ignored. The report released Wednesday by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights strongly cites a lack of independence of Venezuela's judiciary, the closing of news media outlets that are critical of the government and political discrimination and repression under Chavez.

"We don't recognize the commission as an impartial institution," said Gabriela Ramirez, Venezuela's top rights guarantor..

The report condemned the procedures for appointing and removing judges in Venezuela, saying the regulations "lack the safeguards necessary to prevent other branches of government from undermining the Supreme Court's independence."

Government opponents have long complained that the Supreme Court _ whose members are appointed by the predominantly pro-Chavez National Assembly _ has been packed with the president's allies, giving him nearly unlimited power."..."

The OAS commission also called attention to an increase in sanctions against news media, singling out the case of Globovision, a television news network that is fiercely critical of Chavez. Globovision has been repeatedly fined for allegedly violating broadcast regulations, and Chavez has threatened to shutter the defiant network...

The report strongly condemned what it called "a trend toward the use of criminal charges to punish people exercising their right to demonstrate or protest against government policies"..."

VAN ROMPUY INSULTED IN PARLIAMENT

February 24, 2010 The EU Observer reported: "Herman Van Rompuy was subjected to a series of personal insults on Wednesday (24 February) spoiling his maiden appearance in the European Parliament as president of the European Council.

Mid-way through a fairly tame exchange of views on EU policy, Mr Van Rompuy was visibly shocked and uncomfortable when comments by British eurosceptic MEP Nigel Farage took a personal turn. Speaking about Mr Van Rompuy's 15 minute introductory speech, Mr Farage said he had the "charisma of a damp rag" and the appearance of a "low-grade bank clerk."

"I have never heard of you. Nobody in Europe had ever heard of you," the British politician continued, referring to the former Belgian prime minister's surprise appointment late last year to chair the regular meetings of EU leaders.

Virtually unknown outside Belgium, Mr Van Rompuy's low-key manner coupled with not having any pretensions to limelight-stealing were widely seen as key to him securing the job - a new post created by the Lisbon Treaty, in place since 1 December. Since then he has maintained the background approach but has started to make his presence felt by calling an informal economic summit earlier this month, suggesting EU leaders meet every month and making it clear that he intends to be a visible presence at the G20 meeting later this year.

Mr Farage's outburst, which was rounded off with a back-handed compliment that Mr Van Rompuy was also "competent and capable and dangerous," was immediately criticised by his colleagues.

Joseph Daul, head of the centre-right EPP party, suggested the UK should leave the EU as it is apparently not pleased to be in the union."..."

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