



PROPHETIC TIMES

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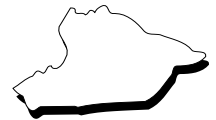
SYRIA TO IRAN: WE WON'T ATTACK ISRAEL IN RETALIATORY STRIKE

December 8, 2010 The Jerusalem Post reports: "The Syrian leadership in Damascus told a senior Iranian delegation to Damascus last year that it would not assist Iran in retaliating to an Israeli strike against its nuclear facilities, according to an American diplomatic cable published on Wednesday by Wikileaks.

Written by the United States Embassy in Damascus, the cable dated Dec. 20, 2009, summed up the visits earlier that month of Iranian National Security Advisor Saeed Jalili, Vice President and head of the Environmental Department Mohammed-Javad Mahamadzideh and Defense Minister Ahmad Ali Vahidi to Damascus.

The cable cited an unnamed Syrian official who claimed that in the talks the Syrians told the Iranians that they would not participate in an Iranian retaliation to an potential Israeli strike.

'We told them Iran is strong enough on its own to develop a nuclear program and to fight Israel,' the Syrian official was quoted as saying in the cable. 'We're too weak.'..."



Syria

EMIRATES SEEK GULF-WIDE MISSILE SHIELD

December 8, 2010 SpaceDaily.com reports: "The United Arab Emirates is reported to be strengthening its missile defense network and plans to integrate it with other Arab states in the Persian Gulf to counter Iran's missile might. Experience shows that is unlikely to happen anytime soon. But even so, the emirates ordered four batteries of U.S. Raytheon Patriot MIM-104 PAC 3 air-defense missiles worth \$3.3 billion in 2008.

In September, the U.S. Congress cleared the sale of three Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-ballistic missile systems produced by Lockheed Martin Space Systems. Other key contractors are Boeing, Raytheon and Honeywell.

THAAD is designed to intercept and destroy short-, medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles such as the Soviet-era Scud, up to Iran's Shehab-3b weapon that currently constitutes Tehran's strategic missile force. The THAAD deal could be worth up to \$7 billion. "...

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are also looking to upgrade their Patriot PAC 2 systems to PAC 3 standard..."

EXTREME WORLD: IS SWEDEN AS CLEAN AS IT SEEMS?

December 9, 2010 bbc.co.uk reported: "The world is considered a more corrupt place now than it was three years ago, a poll suggests. Some 56% of people interviewed by Transparency International said their country had become more corrupt. The organisation put Afghanistan, Nigeria, Iraq and India in the most corrupt category, followed by China, Russia and much of the Middle East.

Meanwhile, a BBC poll suggests that corruption is the world's most talked about problem. About one in five of those polled by the BBC said they had discussed issues relating to corruption with others in the last month, making it the most talked about concern ahead of climate change, poverty, unemployment and rising food and energy costs.

In the Transparency International survey, political parties were regarded as the most corrupt institutions, and 50% of people believed their government was ineffective at tackling the problem.

One in four of those polled said they had paid a bribe in the past year - the police being the most common recipient. Some 29% of bribes went to the police, 20% to registry and permit officials, and 14% to members of the judiciary.

Political parties have long been regarded as the most corrupt institutions - they topped the list in Transparency's 2004 barometer with 71%. In this year's report, 80% regarded them as corrupt.

Religious bodies experienced a sharp rise in people regarding them as corrupt - 28% in 2004 increased to 53% by 2010.

People from Afghanistan, Nigeria, Iraq and India were among those who perceived the highest levels of corruption in their daily lives. At least half of the people surveyed in those countries reported paying a bribe in the past year.

While people from Cambodia (84%) and Liberia (89%) were the most likely to have to pay a bribe, the Danish reported 0% bribery.

Robin Hodess, Transparency's policy and research director, expressed particular concern at the figures on bribery.

"Unfortunately people's experience with bribery most often involves the police, and this is really worrying," she said. "It's a figure that's grown in the past few years. It's nearly doubled, in fact, since 2006. Nearly one in three people who had contact with the police around the world had to pay a bribe."...

By region, people in sub-Saharan Africa were the most likely to have paid a bribe (56%). Bribe taking was least common in EU countries and North America (both 5%) - although these were the two regions seeing the biggest increase in concern about corruption.

Analysts blame this rising concern on the global financial crisis for undermining people's faith in government, banks and economic institutions. Sweden has enjoyed a clean reputation - but is it deserved? The lobby group interviewed 90,000 people in 86 countries to compile its corruption barometer.”...”

GERMANY READY TO SHARE MILITARY DUTIES WITH EUROPE

December 8, 2010 SpaceWar.com reported: “German Defence Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg says he is willing for Germany's military to share some of its duties with other armies in Europe, the Frankfurter Allgemeine daily said. There could be a "sharing of roles and duties" among European countries, the minister wrote in an opinion piece for Thursday's edition of the paper, which released extracts in advance late Wednesday.

Zu Guttenberg and his Swedish counterpart, Sten Tolgfors, will present in Brussels on Thursday a project advocating reinforced European military cooperation. There are military duties considered essential for each nation that would "remain within the national competence," according to the article. Others could be handled through a "straight collaboration between partners, without them abandoning national responsibilities".

In a third category, there were duties for which "one could lean on a European partner", the minister wrote. Examples of cooperation in the last two categories include joint financing of research and development, training and shared use of materials, the minister said.

European defence ministers meet in Brussels on Thursday to examine how to make up for the general cut in national military budgets through deeper cooperation between their armies and industries.”

PARTYING SAUDI STYLE: ELITE, BOOZY AND SECRET

December 8, 2010 The Associated Press reported: “The DJ had the dance floor rocking. The bartender served up a special vodka punch. The host was a prince _ complete with his own entourage. An A-list LA party? Fashion week in Paris?

Try Saudi Arabia, home of roving Islamic morality police enforcing the most austere codes in the Middle East. That's the insider account by a U.S. diplomat, whose night on the town in the Red Sea city of Jiddah (mission: to observe "social interaction" of rich Saudi youth) was summarized in a confidential memo released Wednesday by WikiLeaks.

"The underground nightlife of Jiddah's elite youth is thriving and throbbing," the memo said. "The full range of worldly temptations and vices are available _ alcohol, drugs, sex _ but all behind closed doors."

Wait, this is Saudi Arabia they are talking about? The place where women are banned from driving and can be jailed for socializing with men outside their family? The land whose brand of Islam, known as Wahhabism, is perhaps best known in the West for beheadings and its role as somber guardian for the holy pilgrimage cities of Mecca and Medina?

To those unfamiliar with the undercurrents of the Middle East, it all could seem a bit hard to fathom. But the U.S. cable touches on a basic lesson for understanding the region: public mores and private passions can be very far apart. It's a bit like a cultural version of "don't ask, don't tell."

Wild parties rage behind closed doors in Tehran even as Iran's hard-liners tighten their grip. Conservative Gulf sheiks make sure their wine cellars are well stocked. Outside Saudi Arabia, it's not unusual to see a traveler from the desert kingdom hunkered down at an airport bar or letting loose in Bahrain a favorite party haunt for Saudis who can simply drive over a causeway and, sometimes, weave their way home.

"What one quickly realizes about the Middle East is that there are layers upon layers in society," said Salman Shaikh, director of The Brookings Doha Center in Qatar. But he does not believe that Saudi officials will face much fallout from the disclosure.”...”

WHAT EUROPE SHOULD DO ABOUT THE EURO CRISIS

December 7, 2010 SpiegelOnline reported: “The euro has never been popular with Germans. But now that they might have to atone for the financial sins of other EU countries, the number of euroskeptics has been swelling dramatically.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel would warmly welcome a chance to provide a bit of relief on the domestic front. The way to do so is through something the experts call "creditor liability." In layman's terms, it means that the scoundrels from the banks that lent all the money to the severely cash-strapped EU member states should bear some of the pain resulting from any defaults.

Merkel has publicly stated that the euro zone should no longer be a "land of milk and honey" for the financial institutions that cashed in on high interest rates from their loans without being held responsible when things collapse.

But, as we all know, that won't happen. Once again, Berlin has gone to Brussels and failed to push anything through, not against the alleged friends from France and not against the rest of the Europeans. The banks are apparently now only going to have to help bear the costs in "extreme cases," involving downright insolvency. If it is simply a matter of the countries having problems servicing their debts, the banks are supposed to be "encouraged" to hold on to the government bonds of high-debt nations a little longer.

With this decision, Europe is continuing to pile new debt on top of old, is letting itself sink deeper into a mire of debt, and is just putting off steps that will be unavoidable in the future. The end result will be that when the crash finally does come, it will be all the more devastating.”...”



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