

PROPHETIC TIMES

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ARABS, U.S. SEE DECLINE IN ISRAELI DETERRENCE

January 4, 2007 The Middle East Newsline reported: "Israel's failure to defeat Hizbullah in the 2006 war has eroded the deterrence capabilities of the Jewish state.

The Institute for National Security Studies, formerly the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, said the Lebanon war eroded Israeli deterrence among Arabs and others in the Middle East. The institute, in one of the most scathing reports published in decades, said the war exposed Israel's weaknesses and placed the Jewish state in a worse strategic position.

"The war in Lebanon underscored the problematic and fluctuating nature of Israel's strategic environment, damaged Israel's deterrent image, and exposed weaknesses in the Israel Defense Forces and the decision-making process in Israel," the institute said in a report released on Tuesday.

[On Tuesday, Israeli Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz again rejected calls for his resignation. Halutz said the government has not raised such a prospect.]

The institute, which released its annual Middle East Military Balance, reported a deterioration in regional security and stability. Researchers cited the continuation of the Palestinian war against Israel, Iran's nuclear weapons program, and the failure of the United States to stabilize Iraq."..."

RUSSIA NEARLY COMPLETES SAM DELIVERIES TO IRAN, SYRIA

January 4, 2007 The Middle East Newsline reported: "Russia has delivered more than half of the anti-aircraft defense systems ordered by Iran and Syria.

Russian defense officials said Moscow has accelerated deliveries of surface-to-air missiles to Damascus and Teheran over the last few months. They said the SAM contract with Syria has been completed, while half of the air defense systems arrived in Teheran.

"We are actively carrying out deliveries of the system to Iran," the Russian state-operated Itar-Tass news agency quoted a Russian Defense Ministry official as saying on Tuesday. "At least 50 percent of the contract has been delivered."

In 2005, Iran purchased at least 29 TOR-M1 short-range mobile anti-aircraft systems from Russia. Over the last year, officials said, Iran ordered additional batteries as well as enhancements of the TOR-M1 in an overall contract estimated at \$1.4 billion.

SUPERBUG OUTBREAK IMMINENT, MDS SAY

January 3, 2007 The Toronto Star reported: "A superbug that causes infections resulting in lesions, bleeding pneumonia and, in rare cases, flesh-eating disease is poised to "emerge in force" across Canada, infectious disease experts warn.

An epidemic of community-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or CA-MRSA, is established in the U.S. and beginning to entrench itself here, says a report in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. In Canada, outbreaks have occurred in hospitals in Ontario, including Toronto, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the report says.

The organism is an "old foe with new fangs," a pathogen that is virulent, drug-resistant and has an uncanny ability to spread. So far, its prevalence is thought to be low but rising in most parts of the country.

The infection begins with what looks like a spider bite. It's a red, tender area that rises up and comes to a head just like a small boil. If not treated promptly, the lesions can develop into large, spreading abscesses.

The infection is spread through physical contact, open cuts and scrapes, poor hygiene and sharing personal items.

Athletes appear to be particularly prone. Last summer, Blue Jays outfielder Alex Rios suffered from a staph infection in his leg. Shortly after, pitcher Ty Taubenheim came down with a similar infection on his foot. The Jays called health authorities, who tested, bleached and disinfected the clubhouse. The results came back negative."



U.S. EXPECTS MAJOR STRIKES AFTER SADDAM

January 3, 2007 The Middle East Newsline reported: "The U.S. military has assessed that Iraq would be rocked by major strikes following the execution of ousted President Saddam Hussein. Military sources said the Saddam execution was seen as a Shi'ite attempt to demoralize the Sunni community on Id Al Adha, the most joyous holiday on the Islamic calendar. The sources said they expect Saddam loyalists as well as Al Qaida to conduct major strikes against the majority Shi'ite community as well as assassinate members of the Shi'ite-dominated government of Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki.

"The execution, particularly the video that is available to anybody, has been seen as an attempt by the Shi'ites to humiliate the Sunnis," a military source said. "It's gone beyond Saddam."..."

AHMADINEJAD SCORNS UN SANCTIONS

UN

January 2, 2007 Canada.com reported: "President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad scorned the UN Security Council's imposing sanctions on Iran, telling a crowd Tuesday that Iran had humiliated the United States in the past and would do so again. Speaking in the southwestern provincial capital of Ahvaz, Ahmadinejad said the Security Council's resolution of Dec. 23 was invalid and had left the world body's reputation in tatters.

The council voted unanimously to bar all countries from selling materials and technology to Iran that could contribute to its nuclear and missile programs. It also froze the assets of 10 Iranian companies and 12 individuals related to those programs.

"Let the world know that from the Iranian nation's point of view, this resolution has no validity," Ahmadinejad said. He said the United States was the main power behind the resolution, and warned Washington: "I want you to know that the Iranian nation has humiliated you many times, and it will humiliate you in future."

The United States has led the drive to stop Iran from enriching uranium - a process that produces the material for either nuclear reactors or bombs. Iran denies that it seeks to build atomic weapons, saying its nuclear program is limited to the generation of electricity.

Ahmadinejad said the sanctions were not important but were part of a campaign of psychological warfare against Iran that was designed to provoke dissent within the country.

"You are nobody," he told the western powers. Recalling the West's support for Iraq, then ruled by Saddam Hussein, during its eight year war with Iran in the 1980s, he said: "If all the powers that supported Saddam in his war against Iran were to regroup and confront Iran again, Iranians would deliver a historic slap in their face"

Ahmadinejad said Iran had done everything it could to prove that its nuclear program is peaceful but the West, in the name of opposing nuclear weapons, was trying to thwart Iran's development. "We have tried all legal, wise and logical ways to convince these corrupt and selfish powers," he said of the West."

IRAN WEBSITE HERALDING 'MAHDI' BY SPRINGTIME

January 1, 2007 WorldNetDaily reported: "An official state media website in Iran has posted a message heralding the coming of the Shiite messianic figure, Imam Mahdi, noting he could arrive with Jesus by the spring equinox.

"Imam Mahdi (may God hasten his reappearance) will appear all of a sudden on the world scene with a voice from the skies announcing his reappearance at the holy Ka'ba in Mecca," the message says.

The Islamic Republic of Iran broadcasting website said in a program called "The World toward Illumination," that the Mahdi will form an army to defeat the enemies of Islam in a series of apocalyptic battles, in which the Mahdi will overcome his archvillain in Jerusalem...

The Iranian series also claims the Mahdi will reappear on Earth with Jesus: "We read in the book Tazkarat ol-Olia, 'the Mahdi will come with Jesus son of Mary accompanying him.' ... Imam Mahdi will be the leader while Prophet Jesus will act as his lieutenant in the struggle against oppression and establishment of justice in the world. Jesus had himself given the tidings of the coming of God's last messenger and will see Mohammad's ideals materialize in the time of the Mahdi."..."

BULGARIA, ROMANIA JOIN EUROPEAN UNION

January 1, 2007 The VOA News reported: "Fireworks thundered through the sky at midnight in Romania and Bulgaria, as the two former Eastern bloc nations embraced their new status as members of the European Union.

In the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, hundreds of balloons with "Welcome Europe" written on them rose to the sky. Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov said in a speech in Sofia that January 1, 2007, was the most important date in his country's history.

Some spectators said they realized that Bulgaria and neighboring Romania will now have to prove they are reliable EU partners...

In the Romanian capital, Bucharest, President Traian Basescu shouted to a cheering crowd packing University Square that Romania has finally arrived in Europe.

One young man could not believe his ears. "I am very happy that, this moment, integration finally came, and my expectation for Europe is that we come all together and that all people, all persons, will be like one," he said. "Here in Bucharest, in Berlin, in Paris, all over Europe."

The road toward EU membership was not easy, as tough economic reforms also meant social tensions. And the two countries still have work to do. Average monthly salaries are low compared with wages in western Europe. And several EU states have put restrictions on the number of Romanian and Bulgarian workers, fearing a huge influx."..."