

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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U.S. EASES POLICY ON HAMAS

March 2, 2006 The Middle East Newslite reported: "The Bush administration has significantly eased its opposition to Hamas and no longer sees the Islamic movement as an intractable obstacle to an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.

Officials said the administration has agreed to an international effort to help a Palestinian government controlled by Hamas. They said the administration has set guidelines to ensure continued U.S. financial and other support to a Hamas government that accepts democratic principles and renounces violence.

"We accept Islamist parties if Islamist parties accept the rules of the game," William Jordan, head of the State Department's North Africa bureau, said. "It's up to Hamas to decide whether to accept the rules of the game."

Officials acknowledged that the new administration policy departed from the State Department ban on Hamas as a terrorist organization. Under federal law, the United States and its citizens are banned from supporting or engaging a group deemed terrorist..."

IRAN DEVELOPS MISSILE WITH 4,000-KM RANGE

March 2, 2006 The Middle East Newslite reported: "Iran has launched a missile designed to have a range of 4,000 kilometers.

Western intelligence sources said the Defense Ministry presided over the launch of an intermediate-range missile in January 2006. The sources said the launch was the first of what they termed a Shihab-4 ballistic missile based on a Soviet-origin platform.

The missile was fired and reached a distance of nearly 3,000 kilometers. The sources said the missile was destroyed in mid-flight, but the trajectory indicated that the projectile could have reached a distance of 4,000 kilometers.

"It looks like the test was meant to see if the separation and guidance systems were working," an intelligence source said..."

OLMERT VOWS ISRAEL WILL USE AN 'IRON FIST' TO FIGHT TERROR

March 2, 2006 Ha'aretz reported: "Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, reacting to a recent upsurge in Palestinian militant attacks, vowed Thursday to use "an iron fist" against acts of terror, and said no restrictions would be placed on security forces. Olmert spoke after a rash of shooting and stabbing attacks claimed the life of one Israeli civilian and injured five.

In the latest attack, an Israeli man was stabbed in the neck at a factory in northern Jerusalem on Thursday. Additionally, militants in Gaza have been firing homemade rockets at southern Israel, unsettling residents but causing few injuries.

"We will use an iron fist against any attempt to renew terror activity anywhere," Olmert told reporters during a press conference at the president's residence in Jerusalem. "There are no restraints on security forces to use any means necessary to stop terror attacks."

A day earlier, at a campaign stop ahead of March 28 elections, Olmert said Israel would pursue all opportunities for peace, but would relentlessly fight Palestinian terrorism.

"No one who fires off a Qassam rocket will have a moment's rest, because we shall seek him out everywhere, track him everywhere, reach him and make sure he is not able to do it," Olmert said.

Olmert also told reporters that Israel was intensifying its campaign against the Al-Qaida terror network, in reaction to PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' announcement of signs of an al-Qaida presence in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

"There are, of course, attempts by terror elements, including international ones, to extend their reach in areas adjacent to us," Olmert said.

"We are systematically intensifying our war," he said, adding that "all restraints have been lifted on security forces where preventing and thwarting [terror] is concerned..."

BIRD FLU STRAIN CROSSES TO CAT IN GERMANY

March 1, 2006 EU Observer reported: "Fears of a bird flu pandemic in Europe have taken a new spin as German authorities have detected the deadly H5N1 virus in a domestic cat. German authorities found the dead animal over the weekend on the island of Rugen on the Baltic coast, while dead seabirds were being gathered around the island. Research on the cat corpse subsequently revealed that the cat carried the deadly H5N1 virus. The animal is still being examined to see whether it actually died of the virus, according to German daily Die Welt.

Laboratory leader Thomas Mettenleiter at the Friedrich Loeffler Institute said on Tuesday (28 February) that cats can become infected when eating birds, but that there had not, however, been proven cases of the virus moving from cats to humans. "An infection of humans, which theoretically cannot be ruled out, could probably only occur with very intimate contact to infected animals," Mr Mettenleiter told German media.

Local authorities in the Rugen area immediately urged pet lovers to keep cats inside and walk dogs on leads in public and families were told to not allow cats in bed at night..."

PUTIN SAYS HE IS OPTIMISTIC DEAL WITH IRAN CAN BE REACHED

March 1, 2006 Voice of America News reported: "Russian President Vladimir Putin says he is optimistic a deal with Iran on its controversial nuclear program can be reached. During a visit to Hungary Tuesday, Mr. Putin said it is quite possible to reach agreement on Moscow's proposal to enrich uranium on Russian soil for Iran's nuclear energy needs.

Iran has said it agrees in principle to the deal. But it is unclear if it would also agree to stop domestic uranium enrichment - a demand of Russia and the West.

A Japanese official Tuesday quoted Iran's visiting Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki as saying that the Russian plan would be a bridge between Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy and global trust in Tehran.

The United States and European Union say Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons - a charge it denies..."

ISRAEL TO RETHINK TIES WITH RUSSIA AS HAMAS HEADS FOR MOSCOW

February 28, 2006 Har`retz News reported: "Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will convene a special meeting today on Israel's bilateral relations with Russia. The discussion comes in the wake of Russian President Vladimir Putin's invitation to Hamas to visit Moscow that was extended earlier this month to senior officials, as well as Russia's compromise proposal regarding the international crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear program.

A Hamas delegation led by the head of the movement's political bureau, Khaled Meshal, will travel to the Russian capital on Friday to meet with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and other ministry officials. The Hamas delegation will not be meeting with Putin.

Initially, Hamas refused to send a delegation headed by Meshal if Putin wasn't going to meet with it, but the Islamic organization eventually agreed to the Russians' terms.

Putin's invitation to the senior Hamas officials was yet another expression of the independent stance Russia has adopted recently vis-a-vis the Middle East, and it aroused much criticism in Jerusalem.

Participating in today's talk with Olmert will be Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and senior intelligence community and Foreign Ministry officials.

The head of the National Security Council, Giora Eiland, who maintains an ongoing dialogue with his counterparts in Moscow, will brief the participants on the Israel-Russia relations.

Political sources in Jerusalem said that today's discussion had been scheduled a long time ago, and was a regular annual event. Nevertheless, they added, it now has added significance in light of Russia's increased involvement in the region..."

ISRAEL ENVISIONS FALL OF HASHEMITE KINGDOM

February 24, 2006 The Middle East Newslite reported: "Israel's intelligence community has determined a decline in stability in both Egypt and Jordan.

Officials said military intelligence has envisioned a long-term Islamic threat against Egypt and Jordan that would affect the military balance with Israel. They said the Islamic opposition would hamper Hashemite rule in Jordan as well as efforts by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to transfer power to his son, Gamal.

Over the last day, two senior military commanders discussed these assessment in public forums. In statements that provoked diplomatic protests, the commanders reported instability in Egypt and Jordan.

Egypt and Jordan, who maintain peace agreements with Israel, have been regarded as among the most powerful states in the Middle East. Egypt and Jordan operate air forces based on U.S. platforms.

"I don't want to be a prophet," Maj. Gen. Yair Naveh, head of Israel military's Central Command said. "But I don't think there will be another king after Abdullah."

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