

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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WESTERN COUNTRIES, UN AGREE TO FORM BIRD FLU CRISIS GROUP

March 8, 2006 Voice of America News reported: "Animal health experts from the United States, European Union and UN agencies have agreed on the creation of a new crisis and coordinating center to combat the bird flu virus. A top U.S. Agriculture Department official who attended the Rome meeting said not enough has been done to help affected countries.

As bird flu continues to spread in Europe and new cases of the virus are being reported in cats, animal health experts from the United States, European Union and U.N. agencies are meeting in Rome to discuss urgent new measures. Ron DeHaven of the U.S. Agriculture Department said agreement has been reached on the need for a new global crisis and coordinating center based at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome.

"The avian influenza virus that we are currently dealing with, this H5N1 virus, creates some unique needs that haven't before been addressed," he said. "We have a virus that is now marching across the globe and really requires that there be not just an individual country strategy for all of the affected countries but some way of globally coordinating that whole effort."

So far, the virus has spread mainly among birds. But recently the virus has been detected in cats both in Austria and Germany. Experts fear that the virus will mutate and become easily transmitted to humans. Ron De Haven says not enough has been done to help affected countries attack the H5N1 virus in birds.

"The best thing that can be done to reduce the potential for this to become a pandemic virus is to attack the virus at its source, in birds, and that means doing a better job of assisting affected countries in attacking the virus at its source," he said. "And by reducing the virus load in birds we reduce the potential for the virus to mutate and become the pandemic virus we are so concerned about." ..."

CHINA SENDS WARNING TO US OVER TAIWAN

March 8, 2006 SpaceWar.com reported: "China's foreign minister Li Zhaoxing Tuesday touched on the Taiwan hot button and its capacity to sour bilateral trade relations with the United States. At the same time he downplayed Beijing's recent decision to boost defense spending.

The United States must "have a clear understanding of the dangerous nature of Taiwan independence and secessionist elements and their activities," Li told reporters, while taking "concrete measures to oppose such activities by not sending any wrong signals to those elements."

His remarks come ahead of Chinese president Hu Jintao's trip to Washington next month. Taiwan's recent decision to scuttle a reunification council with the mainland has upset Beijing, which feels the island is making a move towards formal independence. The two countries have had separate governments since a civil war ended in 1949, but China still considers Taiwan part of its territory.

The question of Taiwan "is the biggest factor affecting Sino-U.S. relations," Li told reporters. "We're ready to work with the U.S. side to strengthen our mutual understanding."

When asked by an American reporter how China could claim to be "rising peacefully" while planning to boost defense spending by nearly 15 percent to over \$35 billion dollars in the coming year, the foreign minister was dismissive."..."

IRAN CONDUCTS SERIAL PRODUCTION OF SHIHAB-3

March 8, 2006 Middle East Newline reported: "Iran was said to be engaged in serial production of its intermediate-range ballistic missile. The Iranian opposition reported that Teheran has begun serial production of its Shihab-3 missile. The opposition said that over the last year the Defense Ministry has achieved a production rate of 90 missiles per year.

Until 2004, the opposition said, Iran produced between 15-20 Shihab-3 missiles per year. They said production was limited as the Defense Ministry sought to improve the range and accuracy of the missiles.

But over the last 18 months, the opposition said, Iran achieved a breakthrough in the Shihab-3, designed to be capable of containing a nuclear warhead. The ministry was said to have extended the range of the Shihab-3 from 1,500 to 2,000 kilometers and installed a new navigation and guidance system that significantly reduced the circle of error probability..."

RUSSIAN MOVE ON IRAN CHALLENGES EU UNITY

March 7, 2006 The EU Observer reported: "A looming compromise on Iran's nuclear programme stemming from the latest Russian proposal has put the unity of the EU3 countries - Britain, France and Germany - to the test, agency reports indicate. A deal ending the dispute over Tehran's nuclear programme appeared to come closer on Monday (6 March) as the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Mohamed El Baradei expressed optimism over the Iran dossier.

"I am still very much hopeful that in the next week or so an agreement could be reached," Mr El Baradei stated according to Reuters, ahead of the UN nuclear watchdog's meeting in Vienna this week.

The new optimism over a diplomatic solution to the dispute is said to have arisen from the latest Russian compromise proposal which would allow Tehran some small-scale nuclear enrichment on its own soil, under IAEA supervision. Under an earlier proposal backed by the US and the EU, Moscow had offered to conduct all uranium enrichment for Iran on its own territory as a safeguard against the

risk of Tehran developing an atomic bomb.

But Moscow's latest plan, which would also see some nuclear activity take place in Iran itself, could divide the west, agency reports indicate. Reuters and AP write that of the three EU states handling the Iran dossier on behalf of the bloc, Germany is cautiously backing the Russian proposal, while the UK and France oppose it together with the US.

Germany is the one that "could most live with a pilot enrichment plant in Iran," a European diplomat told Reuters, adding however that Berlin would never allow Tehran to break EU unity in the standoff.

A US state department spokesman rebuffed the idea of small-scale enrichment on Iranian soil, saying "You can't be just a little pregnant."..."

ISRAEL'S OLMERT DECIDES ON NEW PULLOUT

March 7, 2006 Middle East Newsline reported: "Israel's government has decided to focus its reelection campaign on plans for a unilateral withdrawal from nearly the entire West Bank. Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has briefed the United States of his plan for an initial withdrawal from parts of the West Bank in 2007. Under the plan, Olmert, if elected, would order the dismantling of at least 17 Jewish communities in the West Bank.

"It will be only a civilian disengagement, not a military disengagement," Avi Dichter, Olmert's aide and former head of Israeli domestic intelligence, said.

Under the plan, Israel's military would evict about 15,000 Jews from several parts of the West Bank. The areas would remain under nominal Israeli military control..."

GROUP WARNS US-RUSSIA RELATIONS HEADED IN WRONG DIRECTION

March 6, 2006 Voice of America News reported: "The independent Council on Foreign Relations has issued a report Sunday, saying relations between the United States and Russia are headed in the wrong direction. The report was issued ahead of a visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov this week to Washington.

Russia's drift away from democratic rule, the Council on Foreign Relations says, will make it increasingly difficult for the United States and Russia to find common ground on international issues and to cooperate. The spotlight is on Moscow as it prepares to host the G-8 summit in July. The Group of Eight brings Russia together with seven of the world's leading industrial democracies, including the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

U.S. critics of President Vladimir Putin have been calling on Washington to boycott the meeting in protest against Moscow's policies they regard as antidemocratic. These include the recent enactment of a law to curb foreign non-governmental organizations. The critics also accuse Moscow of using energy exports as a foreign policy weapon and making efforts to curtail U.S. and NATO access to Central Asian bases.

The report by the Council on Foreign Relations acknowledges these problems. But its co-chair Jack Kemp, a former Congressman, told the NBC television program Meet the Press that on balance, Washington's relationship with Moscow is too important to be completely cut off.

"There is consensus that without Russia's cooperation - all of the great issues of the day, from nuclear proliferation, to terrorism, to dealing with Iran and North Korea, to dealing with HIV/AIDS, or education, problems of poverty in the third world - we need the cooperation of Russia," said Jack Kemp. "So, it is a pragmatic relationship with Russia, that has to be nurtured."

Kemp said he believes the United States should call together a ministerial level meeting of the original G-7 countries. He said the point isn't to exclude Russia, but to send a message..."

AL QAIDA ISSUES PRIMER ON SAUDI OIL STRIKES

March 5, 2006 Middle East Newsline reported: "Al Qaida has released guidelines for its campaign against Saudi Arabia's energy sector. The primer, released on the Islamic website, was written in 2004 and provided an insight into Al Qaida's strategy to damage the Saudi oil industry. The document, authored by Abdul Aziz Al Enezi, called for attacks on Saudi pipelines and refineries rather than oil wells. "It is permissible to target oil interests held by infidels, including American and Western oil tankers," the 63-page document said. "Targeting oil pipelines is of huge benefit in spiting the enemies. Pipelines may well be the frontline in a long-term war of attrition on oil and its interests."

In May 2005, Al Enezi, regarded as the spiritual guide of Al Qaida, was captured by Saudi security forces. He was said to have sent hundreds of Saudi nationals to join the Sunni insurgency against the U.S.-led coalition in neighboring Iraq..."