

PROPHETIC TIMES

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IRAN'S ALLIES CAN'T RULE OUT U.S. STRIKE

April 5, 2006 The Middle East Newsline reported: "Iran's leading allies have quietly taken into account the prospect that a U.S.-led coalition could try to destroy Teheran's nuclear program.

Western diplomatic sources said that despite Iran's military buildup and increasing influence, allies of Teheran have been monitoring discussions by Britain, Israel and the United States of a military option to eliminate Iran's nuclear program. The sources said that over the last few weeks, Iran has received at least one warning from an ally that the West could be considering such an option.

"As a career military officer, I cannot rule out such a possibility," Russian Chief of Staff Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky said on Monday. "But at the same time I believe that tensions over Iran must be defused with diplomatic, and not military means."

China and Russia have been Iran's leading allies in seeking to prevent sanctions from being imposed by the United Nations Security Council. Britain and the United States have led the effort to impose economic sanctions unless Teheran ends its uranium enrichment program within 30 days..."

US SAYS IRAN WEAPONS TESTS A CONCERN

April 4, 2006 Iran's test-firing of what it called a highly destructive torpedo, atop tensions over Iran's nuclear ambitions, is a "concern", a State Department spokesman said Monday.

"The fact that in three days you've had the test of a missile, as well as the reported test of a torpedo of new capability, demonstrates a weaponization program by Iran that does nothing to reassure Iran's neighbors or the international community," deputy spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters. "It certainly is of concern."

But Ereli said the US is committed to resolving through diplomacy the issue of Iran's uranium enrichment operation -- which the US believes masks a nuclear weapon program. "The United States has made it clear ... that we are committed to a diplomatic solution because we believe a diplomatic solution can work," he said.

Iran meanwhile warned the West Monday not to "play with fire" after it test-fired what it described as a highly destructive torpedo in war games in the Gulf. On Friday Iran also announced the successful test of a new multiple warhead missile capable of evading radar detection.

Ereli said Iran's stance has hurt potential diplomacy. "The reason we're at a standstill is not because the United States isn't in negotiations. The reason we're at a standstill is because Iran, with single-minded purpose, is thumbing its nose at the international community ... and moving with apparently great determination to develop an enrichment capability," of uranium, which could be used for bombs.

An anonymous senior State Department source said Tehran's arms demonstration "demonstrates a show of force designed to intimidate. That behaviour is quite characteristic of the regime."

None of the EU-3 -- France, Germany and Britain -- who are leading negotiations over Iran's nuclear ambitions -- have asked Washington to talk directly to Tehran, the source said.

Ereli also said that Iran had rejected US offers of aid for victims of last week's powerful earthquake in western Iran, which killed 70 people and left 1,300 injured.

He said that Iran's UN ambassador, Jawad Zarif, told Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns Saturday that the Iranian government was very appreciative of the offer of assistance and the condolences, but that they did not need the assistance at this time. Pentagon skeptical but not discounting Iran missile strides."

ATTACK WITH RUSSIAN-MADE ROCKET WORRIES ISRAELIS

April 3, 2006 The World Tribune reported: "Israel's military are treating a rocket attack from the Gaza Strip as a major escalation in the Palestinian war against the Jewish state.

On Thursday, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz convened senior officials and military commanders to discuss the Katyusha strike, Middle East Newsline reported. Officials said the military has assessed that Palestinian insurgency groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad have acquired the Soviet-origin Grad rocket from the Iranian-sponsored Hizbullah in Lebanon.

Officials said the firing of a Katyusha rocket from the northern Gaza Strip on March 28 marked a major boost in Palestinian military capability. They said Palestinian insurgents have demonstrated their ability to operate and maintain the Katyusha rocket, with a range of about 20 kilometers.

"This is a very worrisome development because the Palestinians now have genuine rockets that could cause far more damage than the Kassam [short-range missile]," an official said.

"This is a grave act that requires a determined response," Mofaz was quoted as saying.

[On late Thursday, four Israelis were killed in a suicide bombing at the entrance of the Jewish community of Kedumim in the northern West Bank. The bomber, a Palestinian from the Hebron area, was dressed as an Orthodox Jewish hitch-hiker who hailed a Kedumim motorist. Fatah claimed responsibility for the attack.]

Military sources said the Grad was manufactured and delivered by Iran to the Gaza Strip. They said Iran has transferred Katyushas and production expertise to Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian groups in the Palestinian Authority.

[On Thursday, Palestinian gunners fired five Kassam short-class missiles toward Israel. Israel responded with artillery and naval fire.]

Islamic Jihad has claimed responsibility for the Katyusha attack. In a statement, Jihad said it has acquired "many" Katyushas with a range of up to 30 kilometers.

Jihad identified the Grad as having a caliber of 122 mm and a range of between 18 and 30 kilometers. The rocket was said to measure 2.8 meters, weigh 66 kilograms, including a 17-kilogram warhead.

Jihad spokesman Abu Abdullah said the Grad was produced in Russia and smuggled into the Gaza Strip from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. The spokesman said Palestinians would keep firing rockets in an effort to pressure Israel to withdraw from additional territory around the Gaza Strip.".."

POPE CALLS ON EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES TO RETAIN CHRISTIAN VALUES

March 31, 2006 The EU Observer reported: "Pope Benedict XVI has joined forces with the conservative European People's Party to highlight Christian values as the core of the European project, at a private audience during the party's congress in Rome.

Speaking to some 500 EPP parliamentarians and officials in the Vatican on Thursday (30 March), the Pope urged the politicians to prove their commitment to the Christian heritage by not supporting policies that counter basic principles.

In a list of examples, he mentioned "the protection of life in all its stages, from the first moment of conception until natural death," as well as "recognition and promotion of the natural structure of the family - as a union between a man and a woman based on marriage."

The pontiff bemoaned the fact that there is now a "fairly spread" culture in Europe which "relegates to the private and subjective sphere the manifestation of one's own religious convictions."

But he praised the EU's constitutional treaty for its contribution on maintaining "structured and ongoing relationship with religious communities" at EU level.

The leader of the European Parliament's EPP-ED group, Hans-Gert Pottering, noted in his speech to the Pope and participants in the audience that the group had fought to get a reference to God in the European Constitution.

"Although we were not successful, the final text does embody essential Christian values. The EPP-ED Group, as an advocate of Judaeo-Christian values, is determined about the spiritual and moral dimension of the European project," he said..."

JORDAN READY TO LAUNCH SOF PROJECT

March 1, 2006 The Middle East Newline reported: "Jordan and the United States plan to launch a project to establish the first special operations forces training center in the Middle East.

Officials said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would issue a Request for Information as the first step in a tender to build the SOF training center. They said construction could begin in 2007.

"It will serve as a hub to all counter-terrorism units in the region and the world," Jordanian SOF commander Brig. Gen. Jamal Al Shawabkeh said.

Officials said the United States has provided \$99 million for the training center, expected to become fully operational in 2009. The project was expected to cost \$156 million and fully financed by Washington..."

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