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SEOUL WARNS PYONGYANG AGAINST NUCLEAR TEST

August 23, 2006 VOA News reported: "Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon warned Wednesday that a North Korean nuclear test would have much more serious consequences than Pyongyang's missile tests in July.

"If North Korea conducts a nuclear test, it would create a threatening situation that would shake the foundation of the global non-proliferation system and further isolate North Korea," said Ban.

U.S. news reports last week quoted U.S. officials as saying suspicious activities had been observed at a possible North Korean underground test site.

Ban says Seoul is closely monitoring the situation and sharing information with other nations. A nuclear test by Pyongyang would be the latest incident in a long-running international dispute over North Korea's weapons programs.

North Korea claims it has nuclear weapons, but there has been no independent verification of this assertion, and the North has never tested a nuclear device. What is known is that Pyongyang has extracted enough plutonium from a nuclear reactor to make several nuclear weapons, and might be attempting to enrich uranium to make nuclear fuel as well.

Since 2003, the U.S., South Korea, Japan, China and Russia have been urging the North to abandon such weapons programs, in exchange for economic aid and security guarantees."..."

ISRAEL MAY 'GO IT ALONE' AGAINST IRAN

August 24, 2006 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Israel is carefully watching the world's reaction to Iran's continued refusal to suspend uranium enrichment, with some high-level officials arguing it is now clear that when it comes to stopping Iran, Israel "may have to go it alone," *The Jerusalem Post* has learned.

One senior source said on Tuesday that Iran "flipped the world the bird" by not responding positively to the Western incentive plan to stop uranium enrichment. He expressed frustration that the Russians and Chinese were already saying that Iran's offer of a "new formula" and willingness to enter "serious negotiations" was an opening to keep on talking.

"The Iranians know the world will do nothing," he said. "This is similar to the world's attempts to appease Hitler in the 1930s - they are trying to feed the beast."

He said there was a need to understand that "when push comes to shove," Israel would have to be prepared to "slow down" the Iranian nuclear threat by itself.

Having said this, he did not rule out the possibility of US military action, but said that if this were to take place, it would probably not occur until the spring or summer of 2008, a few months before President George W. Bush leaves the international stage. The US presidential elections, which Bush cannot contest because of term limits, are in November 2008.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, in a meeting in Paris with French Foreign Minister Phillippe Douste-Blazy Wednesday, said Iran "poses a global threat" and needed to be dealt with by the whole international community.

"The first thing they need to do is stop the enrichment of uranium," Livni said. "Everyday that passes brings the Iranians closer to building a nuclear bomb. The world can't afford a nuclear Iran." She said the Iranian reply to the Western incentives was just an attempt to "gain time."..."

ISRAEL BUYS UPGRADED SUBS TO COUNTER IRAN THREAT

August 23, 2006 SpaceWar.com reported: "In a bid to boost its military arsenal against a perceived threat from archfoe Iran, Israel has signed a contract with Germany to buy two submarines capable of carrying nuclear weapons, a newspaper report said Wednesday.

Under the contract signed in July, the two Dolphin-class submarines, called U212s, will be assembled in Germany and fitted with a propulsion system allowing them to remain underwater for far longer than submarines already in use by the Israel navy, the Jerusalem Post said. The state-of-the-art submarines, manufactured by Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft AG, will be bought by Israel for 1.27 billion dollars, a third of which will be financed by the German government, the English-language daily said.

The U212s are designed for a crew of 35, have a range of 4,500 kilometers (2,810 miles) and can launch cruise missiles carrying nuclear warheads, the paper quoted the Jane's Defense Weekly as saying. Israel's defense ministry said it was unable either to confirm or deny the report.

The navy already has three German submarines -- the most expensive weapon platforms in Israel's arsenal that are also thought to be able to carry nuclear weapons. Israel has never acknowledged possessing a nuclear arsenal although it is widely believed to have one.



Germany donated the first two submarines after the 1991 Gulf War and split the cost of the third with the Jewish state. The Jerusalem Post also said the navy was considering installing an underwater sonar system off the coast to detect foreign submarines.

In November 2004, Israel spotted a mystery submarine in its territorial waters, which a naval official said was a foreign vessel on a spying mission. The report of the sub purchase came a day after a cabinet minister and former Mossad spy warned Israel should prepare for a ballistic missile attack by Iran, its arch enemy and one of chief supporters of Hezbollah, against whom Israel waged the month-long war in Lebanon.”...”

IRANIAN WARSHIP ATTACKS GULF OIL RIG

August 24, 2006 The Middle East Newline reported: “In the first such incident in decades, an Iranian warship has attacked a European-operated oil rig in the Gulf.

Romania said the Iranian Navy attacked an oil rig operated by a Romanian company off the coast of Iran on Tuesday. The rig, located near Kish island and involved in an Iranian court case in 2006, was captured and at least 20 Romanians were detained.

Sergiu Medar, a national security adviser to Romanian President Traian Basescu, said Iran's action stemmed from a commercial dispute. Medar did not elaborate, but officials said the Foreign Ministry planned to send a team to the rig, operated by Oil Services Group in cooperation with the United Arab Emirates. Iran and the UAE have a territorial waters dispute.

"We are dealing with a commercial dispute that is being treated in an extreme way by the Iranian authorities," Medar said.”...”

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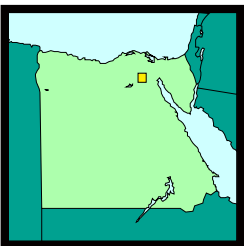
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MUBARAK WARNS AGAINST STRIKE ON IRAN, CRITICIZES SYRIA

August 19, 2006 SpaceWar.com reported: “Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak warned Saturday that a military strike against Iran over its nuclear program would destabilize the Middle East and implicitly criticized Syria for meddling in Lebanese politics.



"The conflict between Iran and the United States must be resolved through diplomacy and a direct dialogue because a strike against Iran would mean an end to stability in the Middle East and worldwide," Mubarak was quoted as saying in the state-run newspaper Akhbar al-Yom.

The Egyptian leader stressed that Iran was an important country in the region and that relations between nations fall under treaties and conventions that forbid one country from interfering in the internal affairs of another.

The United States on Thursday said it will move quickly for UN Security Council action on sanctions against Iran if Tehran refuses to halt uranium enrichment by month's end. Iran insists its nuclear program is for civilian purposes but the United States and other countries believe the Islamic republic is intent on developing nuclear weapons.

Mubarak also implicitly criticized Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad for remarks earlier this week in which he denounced certain Arab and Lebanese leaders for their stand on the war between Israel and the Shiite militant group Hezbollah.

"The current situation leaves no room for political one-upmanship and all efforts must focus on tightening Arab ranks," Mubarak is quoted as saying. He warned against any attempt to meddle in internal Lebanese politics and urged that country's parties to avoid any bickering that could threaten national unity.”...”

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