



PROPHETIC TIMES

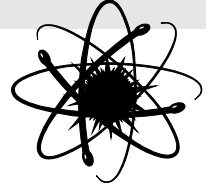
WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

22 MARCH 2003

U.S., RUSSIAN EXPERTS TESTING 'DIRTY BOMBS' IN EFFORT TO COMBAT THREAT

Mar 17, 2003 *The Associated Press* reports: "In New Mexico's desert and Russia's Ural Mountains, U.S. and Russian experts are experimenting with simulated "dirty bombs" to see how such radiation weapons and potential terrorist tools might work, officials of the two countries say.



It's a sensitive area in which some information is withheld to keep clues to bomb-building out of terrorists' hands. But American and Russian specialists attending a global conference on dirty bombs disclosed some aspects of recent testing so the public knows everything is being done to deal with the threat.

These so-called "RDDs," for radiological dispersal devices, haven't made an appearance yet, but the al-Qaida terrorist network, for one, is reported to have shown a serious interest in developing them.

Dirty bombs would combine conventional explosives with strontium, cesium or some other highly radioactive isotope used for such purposes as cancer radiotherapy, searching for oil deposits and sterilizing food. They wouldn't cause the immediate mass casualties or devastation of nuclear weapons, but they are much simpler to make and the contamination and fear of radiation poisoning could cause general panic and shut down sections of cities for years.

Some 600 scientists, government officials and others at the three-day conference that ended Thursday focused on tightening protection of radioisotopes in use worldwide, stopping illicit trafficking and planning emergency responses to such attacks. Others, meanwhile, are trying to learn how a dirty bomb would behave if detonated..."

EXPERTS: NO STOPPING WEST NILE'S MARCH ACROSS U.S.

Mar 18, 2003 *CNN* reports: "West Nile virus may well complete its coast-to-coast spread this summer, infecting large numbers. There's no good way to predict, as the deadly virus is from a family that's notoriously fickle. But during last year's record-setting epidemic -- more than 4,000 people became ill and 274 died -- only a handful of states escaped human illness. Even some of those harbored infected mosquitoes and birds.

And no, the harsh winter in much of the country probably won't lead to a reprieve. Many mosquitoes can survive the cold ... ready to start spreading infection once it's warm enough to re-emerge.

Another myth: that if crows aren't dying in your neighborhood, West Nile probably hasn't spread there yet. Dead birds of any species are suspicious. But of more concern are birds West Nile doesn't easily kill, like common house sparrows. They harbor far more of the virus in their blood than crows do, yet few die -- offering a highly infectious feeding trough for mosquitoes who bite them and then bite us.

Tackling this virus 'is unbelievably complex,' says Dr. Lyle Petersen of the CDC and Prevention, the nation's chief West Nile specialist. The one sure discovery is that 'where West Nile has been, it stays.'

He cautions that he has no crystal ball to accurately predict if West Nile...will prove as bad this year. But Petersen says another large epidemic 'would not be surprising,' with West Nile hitting each of the 48 contiguous states. Not counting Alaska and Hawaii, only nine states have escaped human illness so far."

SADDAM WARNS OF WORLD WAR IF U.S. STRIKES

March 17, 2003 *The Associated Press* reports: "President Saddam Hussein warned Sunday that if Iraq is attacked, it will take the war anywhere in the world 'wherever there is sky, land or water.' Saddam's threat was made during a meeting with military commanders and his remarks were carried by the official Iraqi News Agency. It came as President Bush said Monday was the 'moment of truth' for the United Nations to demand Baghdad's 'immediate and unconditional disarmament.'

Saddam told his commanders: 'When the enemy starts a large-scale battle, he must realize that the battle between us will be open wherever there is sky, land and water in the entire world.' Saddam also denied Iraq has any weapons of mass destruction, as the United States and Britain claim. 'Are weapons of mass destruction a needle that you can conceal in a head cover or in the scarf of an old woman that (U.N. weapons) inspectors cannot find?' Saddam asked. 'There are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq,' he added, joking: 'Well, give us time and the necessary means and we will produce any weapon they want and then we will invite them to come and destroy them.'..."

UN WARNS OF WORLDWIDE THREAT FROM KILLER PNEUMONIA



March 16, 2003 Reuters reports: "The World Health Organization warned on Saturday of a worldwide health threat as a mystery killer pneumonia spread from east Asia to other parts of the globe. Releasing a rare 'emergency travel advisory,' the United Nations health agency said an ill passenger had been taken to an isolation unit in Frankfurt, Germany, on Saturday after being removed from a plane en route from New York to Singapore.

Some 155 other passengers who had been due to change planes or stay in Frankfurt were placed in quarantine there, while the remaining 85 passengers and 20 crew on the Singapore Airlines flight continued their journey, German officials said.

A spokesman for the Geneva-based WHO said there were reports two people had died in Canada, taking the death toll to nine worldwide since the first outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), an atypical pneumonia whose cause is not yet known, was detected in China in February. 'This syndrome, SARS, is now a worldwide health threat,' WHO director-general Gro Harlem Brundtland said in a statement.

Among the dead is an American businessman taken ill in Hanoi after visiting Shanghai. He died on Thursday in Hong Kong where 47 cases have been reported. Some 40 people were being treated in Hanoi, where one nurse died on Saturday, according to local health officials. Cases have also been reported in Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

WHO spokesman Dick Thompson said the passenger taken from the plane in Frankfurt was a Singapore doctor who had visited New York after treating some of the first suspected SARS patients in Singapore..."

EU, NATO SIGN MILITARY PACT

March 16, 2003 UPI reports: "The European Union and NATO Friday signed a groundbreaking agreement to share secret information, paving the way for the EU to take over the military alliance's peacekeeping role in Macedonia later this month in the 15-member bloc's first ever military operation.

NATO Secretary-General George Robertson and Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the EU, signed the deal at a ceremony in Athens. It allows EU-led forces to use strategic planning facilities at NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Mons, Belgium and sets up a secure system to exchange classified military data between the two bodies.

Papandreou said the inking of the pact 'underlines the confidence between the two organizations at a particularly crucial time for the Balkans and for Europe in general.'

At the start of the year, the EU took control of Bosnia and Herzegovina's police force and plans to replace NATO peacekeepers in Macedonia by the end of March..."

REPORT SAYS US MUST FACE NUCLEAR THREATS

March 15, 2003 The Boston Globe reports: "The threat of terrorists setting off a crude nuclear bomb in a major city is real and should be urgently addressed, concludes a private report issued yesterday on controlling nuclear materials.

Senator Richard G. Lugar, Republican of Indiana and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called the findings critical to persuading lawmakers and the Bush administration that more needs to be done to safeguard nuclear materials around the world. The report concludes that the easiest way to prevent such a tragedy is to keep terrorists from obtaining material they can use for a weapon. However, it adds, hundreds of tons of nuclear material continues to be kept with inadequate security in hundreds of locations across the globe.

"The scope of the effort does not match the scale of the threat, at a time when these programs are more essential than ever," Lugar said at a press conference.

The report, part of a project at Harvard University, is the latest in a string of studies on global efforts to keep nuclear materials and warheads out of the hands of terrorists or rogue states..."

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