



PROPHETIC TIMES

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NEW PALESTINIAN PRIME MINISTER SAYS ARAFAT IS STILL IN CHARGE

May 22, 2003 ABC News reports: "New Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas said President Yasser Arafat remained in charge despite a U.S. and Israeli refusal to deal with him, and said his stamp of approval should precede any political action.

'Arafat is at the top of the (Palestinian) Authority. He's the man to whom we refer, regardless of the American or Israeli view of him,' Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, said in an interview with Egypt's semi-official al Mussawar weekly.

'For us, Abu Ammar is the president elected by the Palestinian people and he is the chairman of the whole Palestinian Authority. We do not do anything without his approval,' Abbas said, referring to Arafat by his nom de guerre.

After a power struggle with Arafat, Abbas came to power last month amid intense U.S. pressure for Palestinian reforms. Washington accuses Arafat of doing too little to rein in militants.

'I will not allow any serious differences between Arafat and me,' Abbas told al Mussawar's editor-in-chief Makram Mohamed Ahmed in Gaza. 'There may be day-to-day differences...But there will be no serious problems that lead to 'divorce'.'

Abbas reiterated his backing and respect for Arafat, who symbolizes the struggle for independence for most Palestinians and Arabs. The prime minister said he would not travel abroad until the president was also allowed full freedom of movement..."

WARNING OVER NEW KILLER DISEASES

May 22, 2003 BBC News reports: "Global health chiefs have urged countries around the world to be on alert for new killer diseases. The World Health Organization has warned that new diseases could spread in the wake of the deadly SARS virus. Officials have urged governments to work more closely together to try to deal with the threat.

The call was made at the WHO's annual assembly of its 192 member states in Geneva on Monday. Dr David Heymann, head of its communicable diseases unit, suggested fresh outbreaks of deadly viruses were almost inevitable.

'There will be more outbreaks like SARS, there's bound to be more,' he told journalists. He said the biggest threat would be an outbreak of a deadly strain of influenza. 'The big concern is influenza,' he said.

The last flu pandemic in 1919 claimed 40 million lives across the globe. SARS has so far claimed over 600 lives and has infected nearly 8,000 cases, mainly in Asia...

CANADA SENDS SHOCK WAVE WITH MAD COW CASE

May 21, 2003 The Washington Post reports: "Canada reported its first case of mad cow disease in a decade on Tuesday, a potentially devastating revelation for the country's huge beef industry just weeks after its economy was damaged by the SARS threat.

A cow in Alberta, Canada's top cattle-producing province, tested positive for brain-wasting bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, in a test taken after it was slaughtered last winter, officials said.

'It was (detected) just a few days ago. The actual test was taken Jan. 31 from a cow in Fairview, Alberta,' an official with the Canadian Beef Export Federation said. 'It's just one isolated case of an eight-year-old cow.'

Canada's only other case was in 1993, but the animal was imported from Britain, where the disease caused a crisis and sparked a U.S. ban on British beef imports. Its carcass was destroyed, as was its herd.

The animal with the latest case 'did not enter the food chain' and its northern Alberta herd will be slaughtered, as will any other found to be affected, Canadian Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief told a nationally televised news conference in the Alberta capital of Edmonton.

Still, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman quickly slapped a temporary ban on beef imports from Canada because of the case..."

SOUTH KOREA TURNING TOUGH ON NORTH KOREA

[May 21, 2003](#) *The Associated Press* reports: "South Korea, an advocate of restraint since the North Korean nuclear crisis erupted in October, is running out of patience with its communist neighbor. One week after meeting President Bush, South Korean leader Roh Moo-hyun still backs engagement with the North and says war must be avoided at all costs.

But South Korean officials are now talking tougher, if not with the same vigor as their American allies. The South Koreans acknowledge, albeit vaguely, that means other than engagement might be needed to deal with the North and its suspected development of nuclear weapons.

U.S. officials are considering economic containment as one possibility if dialogue doesn't work, and they haven't ruled out the military option.

South Korean frustration was apparent at economic meetings in Pyongyang Wednesday after North Korea warned of 'unspeakable disaster' if the South confronts the communist state over its nuclear development.

'We should not respond emotionally to North Korea's strong remarks, but we should not cling to talks with North Korea while throwing away our pride,' said Kim Gwang-lim, South Korea's chief delegate.

Another meeting was not scheduled following the North Korean threat Tuesday, and the South Koreans planned to head home on Thursday..."

EU PEACEKEEPING FORCE READY

[May 20, 2003](#) *The Age.com.au* reports: "European Union defense ministers declared their new, 60,000-strong rapid-reaction force ready for a 'full range' of peacekeeping operations, but conceded that hardware shortfalls will make it hard to send and protect the troops.

Gaps in Europe's military arsenal 'limited and constrained' the force's ability to deploy quickly, defend itself if a conflict intensifies or handle more than one mission simultaneously, the ministers said in a statement.

Meeting in Brussels, they pledged to intensify efforts to acquire new equipment ranging from transport planes and air-to-air refueling to precision weapons and protection against germ warfare or poison gas attacks.

'A lot more remains to be done,' said Javier Solana, the EU's foreign and security policy representative. 'It needs to be done as a matter of urgency.'

The force is the centerpiece of the EU's plans launched four years ago to develop a military wing to tackle peacekeeping, humanitarian operations and regional crises, like those that tore the Balkans apart in the 1990s.

Progress on the reaction force puts the EU on track to make good on an offer to take over NATO's 17,000-strong peacekeeping mission in Bosnia at the start of 2004.

EU officials also stressed the advances in defense cooperation, despite deep divisions within the bloc over the Iraq war and plans backed by France and Germany to create a separate European military headquarters, which have been rejected by most other EU nations as a threat to NATO unity..."

OVER 1000 DEAD IN ALGERIAN EARTHQUAKE

[May 22, 2003](#) *Reuters* reported, "The death toll from Wednesday's earthquake around Algiers now stands at 1,092 with a further 6,782 people injured, Algerian state radio quoted Interior Minister Nouredine Yazid Zerhouni as saying Thursday. Zerhouni also said this was a preliminary figure.

The number of known casualties has risen steadily since the tremor struck Wednesday evening and the fate of some people buried under shattered buildings is still not known.

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