

PROPHETIC TIMES

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CLONING YIELDS HUMAN-RABBIT HYBRID EMBRYO

August 14, 2003 The Washington Post reports: "Scientists in China have, for the first time, used cloning techniques to create hybrid embryos that contain a mix of DNA from both humans and rabbits, according to a report in a scientific journal that has reignited the smoldering ethics debate over cloning research.

More than 100 of the hybrids, made by fusing human skin cells with rabbit eggs, were allowed to develop in laboratory dishes for several days before the scientists destroyed them to retrieve so-called embryonic stem cells from their interiors. Although scientists in Massachusetts had previously mixed human cells and cow eggs in a similar attempt to make hybrid embryos as a source of stem cells, those experiments were not successful.

Researchers said yesterday they were hopeful that the rabbit work would lead to a new and plentiful source of embryonic stem cells for research and, eventually, for medical use. But theologians and others decried the work as unethical. Some wondered what, exactly, such a creature would be if it were transferred to a womb to develop to term.

The vast majority of the DNA in the embryos is human, with a small percentage of genetic material -- called mitochondrial DNA -- contributed by the rabbit egg. No one knows if such an embryo could develop into a viable fetus, though some experiments with other species suggest it would not."

AUSTRALIA'S SPY AGENCY WARNS OF BIOLOGICAL, CHEMICAL ATTACKS

August 13, 2003 Bloomberg.com reports: "A biological or chemical attack carried out by terrorists is 'only a matter of time,' said Dennis Richardson, the chief of Australia's security agency. 'There is a genuine concern that a catastrophic attack is certainly only a matter of time,' said Richardson, the director-general of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization. It is unlikely any victory in the war against terrorism will be declared 'any time soon,' he said.

The security body released a transcript of Richardson's speech, which was made last week, on the day a car bomb killed 11 people in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta. Indonesia blamed the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group, which has been linked to the al-Qaeda network, for the attack. Al-Qaeda, in a statement to Arab media at the weekend, said the Jakarta bombing was part of series of attacks it plans to carry out, Cable News Network reported. The al-Qaeda statement warned U.S. and Australian nationals about their presence in Jakarta.

'We have to brace ourselves for a terror attack in Australia,' Prime Minister John Howard said today on *Sky News*. 'This may sound to be a grim warning, but that is the way the world is at the moment.'..."

POLICE GIVEN 'SHOOT TO KILL' ORDERS IN NEW TERROR ALERT

August 12, 2003 The London Daily Telegraph reports: "Police have been ordered to 'shoot to kill' suicide bombers following intelligence warnings that an al-Qaeda terrorist attack in Britain may be imminent. *The Telegraph* can reveal that Sir John Stevens, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, placed his force on its highest alert last week.

He also took the unprecedented step of ordering all front-line officers to be trained in how to spot potential suicide bombers and how to respond.

The decision to issue new guidance has been prompted by intelligence passed to Britain by the FBI in a secret briefing in late July. It warned that London, along with several other foreign cities, was facing an increasing threat of a suicide bomb attack. Britain has already been targeted by al-Qaeda twice this year, although both plots were foiled..."

HIZBULLAH CONTINUES TO SHELL ISRAELI TOWNS

August 11, 2003 The Middle East Newslines reports: "Hizbullah continues to shell northern Israeli towns in the most serious escalation since the Jewish state's pullout from Lebanon in 2000. Hizbullah gunners pounded Israeli communities near the Lebanese border three times over the weekend. Several people were treated for shock.

Israeli officials said the Hizbullah attacks were the most sustained since the Israeli military pullout from Lebanon in May 2000. The Hizbullah have used artillery, mortar and Katyusha rockets in its current offensive. In all, Hizbullah fired 30 Katyusha rockets toward Israel, officials said..."

ARAB NATIONS MULL IRAQ, ISRAEL ISSUES

August 11, 2003 The Associated Press reports: "The Egyptian, Saudi and Syrian foreign ministers hastily called a meeting as Arabs faced pressure to act on the Iraqi and Israeli fronts. The previously unscheduled meeting in Cairo was arranged for Monday, a day after the Syrian-sponsored Hezbollah group shelled northern Israel, killing a 16-year-old and lightly wounding five other Israelis. The attack prompted a raid by Israeli warplanes on suspected Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon.

The Hezbollah-Israeli skirmishes began Friday with the first exchange in eight months of artillery fire over a disputed area near the confluence of the Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli borders. Israeli officials have held Lebanon and Syria - which dominates Lebanese policy-making - responsible for Hezbollah's actions.

Syria's state-run *Tishrin* newspaper charged in an editorial Sunday that Israel was trying 'to expand the circle of its aggression and deliberately provoke and threaten more than one Arab country,' in hopes of slowing progress on the 'road map' peace plan with the Palestinians...□

NATO TAKES OVER AFGHAN PEACEKEEPING FORCE

August 11, 2003 The Associated Press reports: "NATO took command of the 5,000-strong international peacekeeping force in the Afghan capital on Monday, a historic move that marks the alliance's first operation outside Europe since it was created 54 years ago. The alliance took over from Germany and the Netherlands, which have jointly led the International Security Assistance Force, known as ISAF, since Feb. 10.

The outgoing commander, German Lt. Gen. Norbert van Heyst, handed over control during a formal ceremony in an auditorium inside the capital's Amani High School. The new commander, NATO Lt. Gen. Gotz Gliemeroth, who is also from Germany, accepted a green flag from Van Heyst to mark the change.

Present were President Hamid Karzai, German Defense Minister Peter Struck, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Gen. James L. Jones and a host of diplomats and U.N. officials.

Struck said in a speech that the handover showed the world's commitment to rebuilding war-shattered Afghanistan. 'Afghanistan must not lapse back into anarchy and chaos and must not again become the home of global terror, as was the case under the rule of the Taliban,' Struck said□"

MARROW CELLS CAN CURE HEART DAMAGE

August 11, 2003 The London Daily Telegraph reports: "Genetically altered bone marrow cells can heal a heart that has been damaged by a heart attack, according to a study published yesterday. The approach has produced such dramatic results that it has real potential as an effective treatment for human cardiac disease, said Prof Victor Dzau of the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, and a team of colleagues.

Researchers have tried for years to repair damaged hearts with parent cells derived from bone marrow but achieved only limited success. Yesterday, in the journal *Nature Medicine*, Prof Dzau's team describes how to overcome the problem. They genetically altered the cells to make a protein called Akt, which prevents cell death.

After growing the stem cells in culture and introducing the Akt gene, the investigators injected the cells into the hearts of rats induced to have a heart attack or myocardial infarction. They found that, armed with Akt, the cells incorporated themselves in the damaged heart tissue and, compared with cells that were not, were impervious to cell death.

The treatment restored 80-90 per cent of lost myocardial volume, and brought heart performance up to near normal. 'This has never been reported before,' said Prof Dzau. 'With genetic engineering, we can get almost complete repair.' The safety of the method has to be further assessed before discussions with regulatory bodies about human trials, he said□"

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