

PROPHETIC TIMES

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ISRAEL'S SHARON PRESSURED TO END WITHDRAWAL

August 21, 2003 The Middle East Newslite reports: "Israel's government has been under pressure to suspend an agreement to withdraw from four cities in the West Bank in wake of a Palestinian suicide bombing on an Israeli bus.

Officials said Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has been besieged by most of his Cabinet to delay a withdrawal from at least two West Bank cities scheduled for Thursday. The two cities expected to be evacuated by Israel's military were Jericho and Kalkilya.

'There is tremendous pressure for Israel to cancel all agreements with the Palestinian Authority and launch a major operation against [PA Chairman Yasser] Arafat and terrorist organizations,' a senior official said. 'There is a call for immediate action.'

Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz has suspended all military talks between Israel and the PA and imposed a siege on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Officials said the two sides were to have discussed an imminent withdrawal from Jericho and Kalkilya

SAUDIS IN IRAQ 'PREPARING FOR A HOLY WAR'

August 19, 2003 The Financial Times reports: "Increasing numbers of Saudi Arabian Islamists are crossing the border into Iraq in preparation for a jihad, or holy war, against US and UK forces, security and Islamist sources have warned. A senior western counter-terrorism official said the presence of foreign fighters in Iraq was 'extremely worrying'.

A statement purportedly from al-Qaeda was broadcast on Monday by the Arab satellite television channel al-Arabiya. It claimed the al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and the leader of the Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime Mullah Mohammed Omar were still alive. But it also asserted that recent attacks on US forces in Iraq were the work of jihadis.

The focus of concern for US counter-terrorist officials was at first on a reconstituted Ansar al-Islam, the al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group based in northern Iraq before the war. But US officials have recently acknowledged the presence of other foreign fighters in Iraq.

Paul Bremer, the US administrator in Iraq, said recent raids, including one near al-Qaim last month, uncovered fighters 'carrying travel documents from a variety of countries'.

According to Saad al-Faguih, a UK-based Saudi dissident, the Saudi authorities are concerned that up to 3,000 Saudi men have gone 'missing' in the kingdom in two months, although it is not clear how many have crossed into Iraq. Saudis who have gone to Iraq have established links with sympathetic Iraqis in the northern area between Baghdad, Mosul and Tikrit, where they have hidden in safe-houses, a Saudi Islamist source said on Monday

IRAN WARNS ISRAEL AGAINST ATTACKING NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS

August 19, 2003 The Associated Press reports: "Iran, building its first nuclear reactor and planning a second, warned Israel Monday against attacking the nuclear installations as it did an Iraqi facility in 1981. Hamid Reza Asefi, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, told reporters Monday that he hoped Israel, which has warned against Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program, would not resort to such an 'adventure.'

'At any rate, the Zionist regime proved to be adventurous in the past and doesn't abide by any principles. In case it will commit such a mistake, it will pay dearly,' he said.

Israeli officials have been urging the United States and Europe to pressure Iran to stop its alleged nuclear weapons programs after Tehran inaugurated a missile capable of hitting Israel.

Analysts have speculated that Tehran's possession of the bomb could trigger an arms race between Iran and Israel. Israel bombed an Iraqi facility in 1981. Israel has never confirmed being a nuclear power, but it is widely believed to have as many as 100 to 200 such weapons.

Iran denies that it intends to make nuclear weapons and says it seeks nuclear power as an alternative source of energy as its oil reserves diminish

U.S. OFFICIAL CLAIMS SYRIA AIDS TERRORISTS

August 19, 2003 The Associated Press reports: "The top American official in Iraq accused Syria of allowing 'terrorists' to cross the border, and U.S. forces on Tuesday reported another attack, this time from assailants firing from behind an ambulance. No U.S. soldiers were injured in Monday night's attack in which assailants driving alongside an ambulance for cover fired on U.S. forces in one of Saddam Hussein's palaces, a military official said Tuesday.

The attack came shortly after a bomb blew up along the same road in Tikrit, 120 miles north of Baghdad, Lt. Col. Steve Russell of the 4th Infantry Division said. 'We don't believe that the ambulance itself was engaged' in the firing on the troops, Russell said. 'This is not the first time we've seen ambulances used in cross fire.'

But Maj. Josslyn Aberle, also of the 4th Infantry, said that while no gunfire came from the ambulance, soldiers found an automatic rifle and ammunition inside. The three occupants, one of whom was wounded, were detained for questioning.

L. Paul Bremer said in remarks published Tuesday that Syria, which opposed the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, was allowing 'foreign terrorists' to sneak across the border into Iraq. 'We held talks with the Syrians in this regard, we hope to see better cooperation,' Bremer told the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Hayat.

Bremer also said he was 'still worried' over Iran's meddling in Iraq's affairs, accusing Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Iranian intelligence of actively working against the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq"

TURKEY'S GOVERNMENT APPROVES TROOPS FOR IRAQ

August 17, 2003 The Middle East Newslite reports: "The government of Prime Minister Recep Erdogan has quietly decided to send up to 10,000 Turkish troops to Iraq.

Officials said the decision would make Turkey the third biggest military participant in the U.S.-led effort to stabilize Iraq. They said the government decision would be sent for parliamentary approval next week, where it is expected to encounter significant opposition.

The government decision was taken in coordination with the military's General Staff, officials said. They said both the military and government agreed that Turkish military deployment in Iraq was important for Ankara's relations with the United States as well as regional interests.

The Turkish military was said to have been swayed by a U.S. commitment to battle Kurdish insurgents in northern Iraq who refuse to surrender under an amnesty offered by Ankara. So far, only a handful of Kurdish Workers Party, or PKK, combatants have sought amnesty"

RECESSION IN THE EU GAINS GROUND

August 14, 2003 EUObserver reported: "Germany and the Netherlands have joined Italy in officially being considered in recession according to figures released by the EU's statistical arm, Eurostat, on Thursday (14 August). Germany, Europe's biggest economy, recorded a 0.1% economic contraction in GDP for the period April to June, while the Netherlands recorded a 0.5% contraction in the second quarter.

Speaking to N24, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder preferred not to call it recession. "I would talk of stagnation in the first two quarters", he said in the interview. Last week, Italy also slipped into recession. France is due to present its figures next week. Official data showed that the eurozone economy did not register any growth between the first and second quarters of the year. Similarly, the wider EU economy stagnated during the second quarter. In an interview with Italian state broadcaster RAI, Commission President Romano Prodi said Europe's problematic economic recovery can partly be attributed to the EU's difficulty in reaching agreement on decisions. He pointed out that economic recovery was already under way in the US thanks to its centralized system. A recession is defined as an economy shrinking over two successive quarters."

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