

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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SAUDIS CONSIDER NUCLEAR BOMB

September 18, 2003 The Guardian UK reports: "Saudi Arabia, in response to the current upheaval in the Middle East, has embarked on a strategic review that includes acquiring nuclear weapons, the Guardian has learned. This new threat of proliferation in one of the most dangerous regions of the world comes on top of a crisis over Iran's alleged nuclear program. A strategy paper being considered at the highest levels in Riyadh sets out three options:

- To acquire a nuclear capability as a deterrent;
- To maintain or enter into an alliance with an existing nuclear power that would offer protection;
- To try to reach a regional agreement on having a nuclear-free Middle East.

Until now, the assumption in Washington was that Saudi Arabia was content to remain under the US nuclear umbrella. But the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the US has steadily worsened since the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington: 15 of the 19 attackers were Saudi.

It is not known whether Saudi Arabia has taken a decision on any of the three options. But the fact that it is prepared to contemplate the nuclear option is a worrying development□"

JORDAN RESCINDS DECISION TO FREEZE HAMAS ASSETS

September 18, 2003 The Middle East Newslines reports: "Jordan, alarmed by a harsh response from the Islamic opposition, has rescinded a decision to freeze assets of Hamas. Jordanian officials said the measure announced on Monday was never approved by the government in Amman. As a result, they said, the freeze has been lifted and would be reviewed over the next few weeks.

Jordanian Information Minister Nabil Sharif said a decision to freeze the accounts in the kingdom of Hamas leaders based in Beirut, Damascus and Gaza City was not political. Instead, Sharif was quoted by the official Petra news agency as saying that the decision was 'for banking purposes only.'

Later on Tuesday, the Jordanian Central Bank said it had rescinded its decision to freeze Hamas assets in the kingdom. The bank, in a statement reported by Petra, did not elaborate□"

BUSH OPPOSES SYRIAN SANCTIONS BILL

September 18, 2003 The Middle East Newslines reports: "The Bush administration, despite concern that Syria has transferred weapons of mass destruction to groups deemed as terrorists, opposes congressional legislation to impose new sanctions on the regime of President Bashar Assad.

The administration's position was outlined by Undersecretary of State John Bolton during a House hearing on Tuesday. Bolton did not rule out additional diplomatic and economic measures on Damascus, but nixed the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, which would impose a virtual trade embargo on Syria.

'Members of this committee have sponsored the Syria Accountability Act, which would impose restrictions on the export of U.S. goods to Syria, as well as other measures,' Bolton said. 'However, we already possess a broad mandate to sanction countries like Syria for proliferation activities under Executive Order 12938. Many of these same penalties are duplicated in the proposed Syria Accountability Act.'

The 1994 executive order requires denial of foreign assistance from U.S. government agencies, U.S. opposition to multilateral development bank assistance, denial of defense exports and national security-sensitive exports, restrictions on imports into the United States and a termination of aircraft landing rights□"

CHINA NEARS FIRST HUMAN SPACE FLIGHT

September 17, 2003 NewScientist.com reports: "A month-long countdown to the launch of China's first astronaut began on Monday, according to reports. Unnamed space program officials told the Hong Kong newspaper Wen Wei Po that the historic flight would take place shortly after the week-long celebrations that mark the anniversary of communist rule. These begin on 1 October. The exact date will not be decided until about a week before the launch.

They also disclosed that the Shenzhou spacecraft will carry a single Chinese astronaut into space. The chosen 'taikonaut' will be selected from a group of three candidates shortly before launch according to officials.

China has so far launched four uncrewed Shenzhou spacecraft in preparation for its first crewed mission. Both Shenzhou V and the Long March 2F rocket that will carry it into space have been installed at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in Gansu, northwest China.

If successful, the mission would make China only the third nation to launch humans into space, after Russia and the United States. The first taikonaut in space will become a national hero. The Chinese government believes the feat will be a source of great international prestige and also bring technological and industrial benefits"

COMMISSIONER SAYS ALL EU COUNTRIES EXPECTED TO JOIN THE EURO

[September 15, 2003](#) EUOBSERVER reported: "Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Pedro Solbes said that he respects the No of the Swedish people in the referendum on the euro, but that it cannot remain outside the euro zone forever. "The Commission expects all the members of the EU to become members of the euro zone at a certain point", Mr Solbes said this evening as he gave his first reaction to the Swedish poll.

Sunday's 'Nej' from the Swedes risks influencing the other two EU countries outside the euro zone - the UK and Denmark. Pedro Solbes admitted that a 'Yes' could have increased support in Denmark and the UK, but added that the three countries are completely different and have therefore different political approaches. Pedro Solbes also warned that countries outside the euro zone have less influence on the decisions that are taken regarding the euro area economy. "You have more capacity to influence when you are in the euro area", he said.

While Britain and Denmark have legal opt-outs from the Maastricht Treaty that establishes the euro, Sweden does not, but took a political decision not to join. The question now remaining is if some of the 10 acceding countries - that are legally bound to join the euro under their accession treaties - will exercise a similar political choice as Sweden."

AL-AQSA VOWS TO 'STRIKE EVERYWHERE' IF ARAFAT EXPELLED

[September 13, 2003](#) Ha'arez reports: "The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed offshoot of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, warned on Friday that it would "strike everywhere" if Israel makes good on a decision in principle to banish the veteran leader.

Earlier in the day, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz told U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer that Israel's failure to exile Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat earlier was a historic mistake. Mofaz told the envoy that Israel views Arafat as an obstacle to making progress in any diplomatic process, Israel Radio reported.

Mofaz, who was meeting with Kurtzer to discuss the government's decision on Thursday to "remove" Arafat from the territories, also said Israel remains committed to the road map and to the vision of United States President George W. Bush, according to the report.

Mofaz was quoted as saying that Israel will make every effort to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure, since the Palestinians have not yet done so, and added that destroying the infrastructure would be the real test of the new Palestinian government.

Kurtzer reiterated the United States' opposition to exiling Arafat, and said the U.S. is still interested in implementing the road map, Israel Radio reported. Her was also quoted as saying that the U.S. will continue supporting Israel's right of self-defense"

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