



PROPHETIC TIMES

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U.S. VOICES ASSESSMENT OF WMD TO SYRIA

October 30, 2003 The Middle East Newslite reports: "For the first time, the U.S. intelligence community has released an assessment that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction were transferred to neighboring Syria in the weeks prior to the U.S.-led war against the Saddam Hussein regime.

U.S. officials said the assessment was based on satellite images of convoys of Iraqi trucks that poured into Syria in February and March 2003. The officials said the intelligence community assessed that the trucks contained missiles and WMD components banned by the United Nations Security Council.

The U.S. intelligence assessment was discussed publicly for the first time by the director of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency in a briefing in Washington on Tuesday. James Clapper, a retired air force general and a leading member of the U.S. intelligence community, said he linked the disappearance of Iraqi WMD with the huge number of Iraqi trucks that entered Syria before and during the U.S. military campaign to topple the Saddam regime.

'I think personally that the [Iraqi] senior leadership saw what was coming and I think they went to some extraordinary lengths to dispose of the evidence,' Clapper said. 'I'll call it an educated hunch.'...

EGYPT INVESTS HEAVILY IN AIR MODERNIZATION

October 28, 2003 The Middle East Newslite reports: "Egypt's air force has undergone the most significant modernization of any military in the Arab world. A report by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies said the Egypt has developed a powerful offensive air capability that could challenge any country in the Middle East, including Israel. But the report said Egypt's air force has been hampered by inadequate training and systems integration.

'The Egyptian Air Force has attempted one of the most far-reaching modernization efforts of any Arab air force in the Middle East, weathering the burdensome transition from Russian systems and doctrines to Western ones,' the report, authored by [Res.] Col. Shmuel Gordon, said. 'Moreover, the Egyptian Air Force's increasing confidence is reflected in its acquisition of aircraft for deep-penetration strikes into enemy territory. Previously, the importance of this potential mission was downplayed, but today it probably represents a more substantial role.'

The report, entitled 'The Egyptian Air Force: Modernization Efforts And American Assistance,' is part of a new book published by the Tel Aviv University center. The book is entitled 'Dimensions of Quality A New Approach to Net Assessment of Airpower' and advocates a reassessment of military strength...

CHINA PLAYS INCREASINGLY DOMINANT POLITICAL ROLE IN ASIA

October 26, 2003 Voice of America News reports: "China's growing influence in Asia was on display during a series of regional gatherings this month. From the summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Bali to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum meetings in Bangkok, China has received top billing in regional October gatherings. Chinese leaders were feted to elegant dinners, courted by business groups and basked in high profile media attention.

Beijing has been on a charm offensive in recent years, especially in Southeast Asia, where it still has outstanding territorial disputes. So says Stapleton Roy, a former U.S. ambassador to China.

'China has been very successful, in my view, in the last few years in trying to overcome some of its former frictions in the region and establish a pattern for more effective cooperation with countries of Southeast Asia,' said Mr. Roy.

It has been difficult for China's neighbors not to warm up to the communist giant, which is in transition to a free market and a full-fledged member of the World Trade Organization. China has used its huge market to entice Southeast Asian nations with offers of trade arrangements.

China and the 10 Southeast member-nations agreed last year to form the largest free trade zone in the world by 2015. As conflict is bad for trade, they also signed a non-aggression pact in their annual summit earlier this month...



SWEDISH TEAM DISCOVERS POWDERED FORM OF BLOOD

October 26, 2003 The National Post reports: "In a medical first, doctors in Sweden have successfully used artificial blood to treat patients. The product is a powder made from blood that has been stored for more than six weeks and can not be used for transfusion.

'If this really works all the way, then mankind will have taken a big step forward,' Dr. Pierre LaFolie, chief physician at Karolinska Hospital, said on Swedish radio yesterday. 'This is like landing on the moon.'

The substance, called Hemospan, would reduce the critical shortages of blood needed for emergency transfusions. The powder can be mixed into liquid when required, and transfused into patients regardless of their blood type. It could also be derived from the blood of any mammal, greatly expanding the sources of transfusion. And the substance appears to ferry oxygen to the body better than real blood. This can prevent damage to the brain and heart during a heart attack.

Dr. LaFolie said Hemospan could save time in an accident, since no blood typing would be required. 'In acute situations time is of the essence, within an hour all these things have to be done,' he said. 'That's why I think this artificial blood is so important for people.'..."

LOCUSTS THREATEN AFRICAN CROPS, WARNS UN

October 24, 2003 Voice of America News reports: "The United Nations Food and Agriculture organization (FAO) warns that swarms of desert locusts could threaten crops across Africa. The U.N. organization said the outbreak could become critical within weeks. The Rome-based FAO has alerted the governments of Mauritania, Niger, Mali and Sudan that outbreaks of locusts were reported in their countries. The agency's locust group says swarms of locusts may devastate crops in the northern areas of these countries and spread to the neighboring countries.

While desert locusts are normally solitary, scattered insects, under certain climatic conditions, they increase in numbers and band together in huge swarms, devouring vast areas of vegetation. Tens of millions can join up and travel great distances.

FAO locust expert Annie Monard says rains in these countries have allowed desert locusts to breed and rapidly increase in number. 'The rainy season was very humid and very suitable for locust development this year,' she said.

The FAO official added that the problem needs to be addressed immediately or it will get much worse. 'First of all it is necessary to carefully monitor the situation and to carry out extensive surveys all over the area where the ecological conditions are suitable for locust breeding,' she said.

Ms. Monard added that the level and phase reached by the locust population also needs to be assessed. The agency fears that, if the problem worsens, locusts could move north from Mauritania into Morocco, from Sudan toward the Red Sea, and from Niger and Mali into southern Algeria..."

SYRIA CONTINUES TO SEND FIGHTERS TO IRAQ

October 29, 2003 The Middle East Newswire reports: "Al Qaida has recruited fighters from Syria for suicide and other attacks against the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

U.S. officials said they have found evidence that hundreds of Syrian and other Arab nationals have entered Iraq from Syria over the past few weeks and joined new Al Qaida-related units for attacks against U.S. and Western targets in Iraq. They said the Islamic mercenaries were believed to have been involved in the wave of suicide bombings in Baghdad on Monday, the start of the Islamic fast month of Ramadan.

'There are actual foreign terrorists that come into Iraq that need to be dealt with, with more military means, more aggressive means, to stop them from coming in and root them out,' State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said. 'The issue of people coming in from Syria has been an issue that we have dealt with, that we have raised, and we continue to raise on an ongoing basis with the Syrian government to prevent outside elements from coming in from Syria, who might get involved in this sort of thing.'

The Syrian and other Arab mercenaries have been wooed by huge salaries and bonuses for attacks against U.S. troops and interests, officials said. They said the Al Qaida network has also decided to focus on U.S. civilian and other soft targets, particularly in the Baghdad area, to avoid insurgency casualties..."

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