



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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PRESIDENT BUSH TO RENEW QUEST FOR THE NEW FRONTIER

December 3, 2003 National Review reported: 'When President Bush delivers a speech recognizing the centenary of heavier-than-air-powered flight December 17, it is expected that he will proffer a bold vision of renewed space flight, with at its center a return to the moon, perhaps even establishment of a permanent presence there. If he does, it will mean that he has decided the United States should once again become a space-faring nation. For more than 30 years America's manned space program has limited itself to low Earth orbit; indeed, everyone under the age of 31 – more than 125 million Americans – was born since an American last set foot on the moon.

The speech will come at a time when events are converging to force some important decisions about the future of American efforts in space. China has put a man in orbit, plans a launch of three Sinonauts together, and has announced its own lunar program. The space shuttle is grounded, and its smaller sibling, the "orbital space plane," may not be built. The International Space Station, behind schedule, over budget, and of limited utility, has been scaled back post-*Columbia*.

The content of the speech does not appear to be in doubt; the only question is timing. While those who have formulated it have argued that it be delivered on the anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first powered flight, there exists a slight possibility that it will instead be incorporated in the State of the Union address at the end of January. If the president goes ahead with the plan to announce an ambitious new program to carry Americans beyond Earth's immediate gravitational pull, he will argue that the new lunar explorations are justified not only for what they themselves might produce but also as a means of developing the technology and skills necessary for a mission to Mars, which is expected to be mentioned, though in less-specific terms, in the address...'

BEIJING WARNS THAT TAIWAN'S REFERENDUM COULD LEAD TO WAR

December 3, 2003 The New York Times reported: 'Chinese military officers said today that Taiwan's leadership had pushed the island toward the "abyss of war" with its independence drive, making clear that China would consider a popular vote on Taiwan's political status as cause for war.

In lengthy interviews carried prominently by the official New China News Agency and other news outlets, the military officials also said that China would prevent Taiwan from formally declaring independence even if that meant pushing the mainland economy into a recession or destroying its plans to be host to the 2008 Olympics.

"Chen has reached the mainland's bottom line on the Taiwan question," said Luo Yuan, a senior colonel with the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, referring to Taiwan's president, Chen Shui-Bian. "If they refuse to come to their senses and continue to use referenda as an excuse to seek Taiwan independence, they will push Taiwan compatriots into the abyss of war."

Maj. Gen. Peng Guangqian was quoted as saying that the mainland would attack without hesitation if Taiwan sought a formal split. "Taiwan independence means war," Mr. Peng said. "This is the word of 1.3 billion people, and we will keep our word."

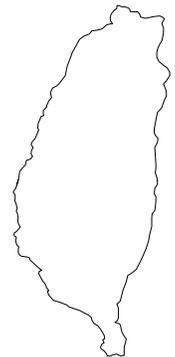
The comments were the most strident in a barrage of explicit threats directed toward Taiwan in recent weeks by mainland leaders, and they may indicate a decisive shift in Beijing's approach to managing Taiwan affairs.

For the past several years, China has sought to downplay what it considers political provocations by Mr. Chen. Beijing has courted Taiwanese businessmen and promoted economic integration between the two adversaries, which have been politically divided since the Communists won a civil war in 1949, hoping to create a broader popular constituency in Taiwan that favors eventual reunification...'

EU CONSTITUTION DRAFTERS AGREE ON DEFENSE BUT DISAGREE ABOUT GOD

November 29, 2003 The AP reported: 'France, Britain and Germany won broad support Saturday for a plan to strengthen Europe's defense capabilities, but EU countries failed to reach agreement on the emotionally charged issue of whether the EU constitution should mention God or include a reference to Europe's Christian heritage.

EU foreign ministers welcomed the defense plan as a major achievement in efforts to map out an independent military role for the European Union while keeping NATO as the continent's primary defender. Italian Foreign Minister Franco



Frattini called the deal "a major step forward" for the European Union. However, the ministers cautioned that the carefully worded plan, which includes a guarantee of mutual assistance and a scaled-down headquarters, still needs Washington's blessing.

The United States has long been wary of European defense initiatives, worried they could erode NATO, which has formed the backbone of European defense since World War II. Britain, in particular, has been concerned about how Washington would view the adoption of a common European defense strategy.

In other areas, ministers made little headway during the two days of talks in Naples. With the deadline for the final draft just two weeks away, EU nations remain deeply divided over a number of issues, including whether the constitution should include a reference to God or Christianity. EU nations also remain at odds over how the bloc will make common decisions on foreign policy, with small nations worried about ceding power to larger ones.

France, Germany and Britain proposed a permanent EU military planning and command cell at NATO's military headquarters in Belgium where EU planners - with the alliance's backing - can use NATO planes, satellite intelligence and communications network for peacekeeping missions.

The plan diplomatically avoids the word headquarters so it won't give the impression it rivals the NATO head office in Brussels. The Europeans would also have a long-term, strategic planning unit at the EU head office in Brussels, Belgium. It could plan for independent European military operations similar to the French-led EU peacekeeping operation in the Congo this year. Not all EU members would have to participate.

The proposed defense plan also includes a mutual defense guarantee saying if an EU state "is the victim of an armed aggression on its territory, the other member states shall" come to its aid.'

EURO'S RECORD-BREAKING RISE AGAINST DOLLAR COULD HARM RECOVERY

December 1, 2003 The EU Observer reported: 'The euro hit record highs against the dollar in trading on Friday, breaching the psychologically important barrier of \$1.20, before easing slightly ahead of the market's close. Trading was light because US markets were closed for Thanksgiving, but the euro also gained against the Yen showing that currency traders have by-and-large shrugged off last week's "death" of the euro zone's Stability Pact.

But many analysts were quick to point out that the euro's rise against the dollar was more to do with the weakness of the US currency, rather than any perceived euro strength. The European Commission may worry about the budget deficits of France and Germany, which are above the three percent of GDP limit permitted by the rules underpinning the euro.

However, currency traders point to the fact that the US budget deficit is expected to be over five percent next year. The greenback has also been hit by geopolitical concerns and fears of renewed terrorist attacks against American interests. A worrying trend ... for exporters.

And the new-found strength of the euro is not all good news for the euro zone. When the euro is strong against the dollar, it makes euro zone exports relatively more expensive in the US, so export sales tend to decline. And the nascent euro zone economy has thus far been built around strong export growth, which could be stifled by the rising value of the zone's currency.

Germany - the largest economy in the euro zone - is especially dependent on exports for economic growth and if the German recovery stumbles, the rest of the euro zone may fall.

"In dollar terms the euro is up 15 per cent on the year ... That will weigh on the recovery next year", said Rainer Guntermann of Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, quoted by the FT.

OUR AWESOME UNIVERSE

December 4, 2003 A recent survey of the night sky calculates the number of stars that can be seen by Earth's telescopes to be about 70 sextillion (70 followed by 21 zeroes). Scientists say that's 10 times the number of grains of sand on the Earth, and nearly the number of tablespoons of water you could scoop out of the Earth's oceans.

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