



PROPHETIC TIMES

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CONGRESS MULLS BILL TO REVISE U.S. AID TO EGYPT

February 19, 2004 Middle East Newslite reported: "The House of Representatives has begun an examination of legislation that would revise U.S. aid to Egypt. Rep. Anthony Weiner, a New York Democrat, has introduced a bill that would replace the \$1.3 billion in U.S. military aid to Egypt with economic assistance. The legislation would also link continued U.S. aid to democratic reforms in Egypt.

The bill, termed the "Egyptian Counterterrorism and Political Reform Act," has been regarded as the latest attempt by Congress to redefine U.S. relations with leading Arab states. In December President George Bush signed the Syrian Accountability Act, which paves the way for additional sanctions on Syria. In late 2003, the Saudi Accountability Act was introduced in Congress.

Weiner, citing Palestinian weapons tunnels from the Gaza Strip to the Sinai Peninsula, said Egypt has failed to honor its peace treaty with Israel. He said his legislation would convert all U.S. military aid into economic assistance used for development, the import of non-military U.S. goods, and the implementation of economic reforms."

THAILAND, VIETNAM REPORT MORE BIRD FLU DEATHS

February 18, 2004 VOA News reported: "Authorities in Southeast Asia are reporting two more human fatalities from bird flu. Vietnam reported its 15th death Wednesday, while experts in Thailand say a boy who died two weeks ago also succumbed to the respiratory virus. The boy's death is the seventh in Thailand linked to bird flu.

Asia remains on a region-wide health alert, with new human infections reported almost daily in China. Pacific rim governments have slaughtered more than 80 million chicken and ducks in an effort to control the spread of the disease, which health experts say was passed from live poultry to humans in most if not all of the cases.

U.S. experts say a milder strain of bird flu found in chickens in the United States does not infect humans. But authorities have nonetheless ordered the wholesale slaughter of chickens in parts of two eastern states.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization says it is unlikely that Asian nations will be free of bird flu next month, as some countries had predicted. Health experts say bird flu will continue to pose a threat to humans, especially those working on Asian chicken farms."

DEBATE ERUPTS OVER AL QAIDA NAVY

February 19, 2004 Middle East Newslite reported: "A debate has emerged among intelligence services over whether Al Qaida has a naval capability. The debate includes those who assert that Al Qaida has control over as many as 300 vessels for smuggling and attacks on Western and allied shipping. They are pitted against intelligence analysts who maintain that Al Qaida does not have a credible naval capability.

The debate took place during the two-day annual meeting by Israeli, Indian and U.S. strategists and officials in Herzliya, Israel. The meeting was attended by Israeli ministers and the commander of the navy.

"An Al Qaida navy is a contradiction in terms," Israel Navy commander Vice Adm. Yedidya Ya'ari said. "It is completely impossible. The minute they have a navy in existence, they become vulnerable."

RABBIS DECLARE: LAND IS NOT ANYONE'S TO GIVE AWAY

February 18, 2004 Arutz Sheva - Israel reported: "Over 200 rabbis from all over Israel arrived in the Ramada Renaissance Hotel in Jerusalem yesterday for what was termed an emergency session of the Union of Rabbis in light of the threat to the integrity of the Land of Israel. Speaker after speaker expressed objections on every possible grounds to the Prime Minister's plan to withdraw Israeli control from Gaza and expel close to 8,000 Jews from their homes in the Land of Israel.

Presiding over the conference was Rabbi Avraham Shapira, who served as Israel's Chief Rabbi from 1983-1993, and who heads the Central Universal Yeshiva (Merkaz HaRav) in Jerusalem. "The events have shown all of us that, Heaven forbid, whoever harms the Land of Israel, whoever thinks thoughts in this direction, loses his seat and his regime," Rabbi Shapira said. "We are expressing not a political opinion, but the opinion of Torah; whoever wants to hear it, will hear it. The Torah says that the entire land is ours and we must not give it away, and especially when it is liable to lead to loss of life."

"We come in the name of the Torah to strengthen and be strengthened," Rabbi Shapira continued. "The entire public, our rabbis and their students, will cry out and will act, even if we have to instruct the public to gather in Gaza, in Gush

Katif, we will do that, with G-d's help, with might and valor and greatness, to double and triple the number of Jews there, and not allow the evacuation and uprooting of a Jewish town. It is against Torah law and simple morality, and the government must not even discuss it!"

A position paper distributed at the conference read as follows: "The right and obligation of the Nation of Israel towards the Land of Israel is an eternal right to the entire land and throughout all the generations. The plan to uproot flourishing communities from their land is in total opposition to the Torah of Israel..."

The conference drew the attention of extreme-left MK Zahava Gal'on (Meretz), who said that the Attorney-General should investigate whether the rabbis' words constituted incitement against the government. She added that the rabbis are a "ticking time bomb."

MINOR COLLAPSE HIGHLIGHTS TEMPLE MOUNT INSTABILITY

February 17, 2004 Jerusalem Newswire Israel's Temple Mount, the most hotly contested place on earth - believed by many to be a potential trigger for World War Three - is in the spotlight again after a moderate earthquake and subsequent snowstorm caused the collapse of an adjacent stone embankment Saturday.

The cave in - which sent large rocks crashing down into the women's prayer section in front of the Western Wall, but caused no injuries - highlighted again the precarious overall condition of Judaism's holiest site, a site the Islamic world is working vigorously to usurp.

According to the Bible, a Temple to the God of Israel will again be built on the Temple Mount prior to the final coming of Messiah. Bible believers understand that, for this to happen, the Muslim mosques now straddling God's holy hill would have to somehow be removed.

Since Saturday, Israeli archeologists, whose previous recommendations have been largely ignored by the government, have reiterated warnings that unchecked Muslim construction on the Mount was weakening its support structure. Illegal Waqf (Islamic Trust) renovations at the site are believed responsible for a major bulge in the Temple Mount's southern retaining wall, a situation that could lead to a serious disaster, archeologist Eilat Mazar has cautioned.

Palestinian terrorists blamed Israel for Saturday's collapse, vowing to "take revenge" on the Jews..."

CALL' FOR EUROPE'S GOAL TO CATCH U.S.

February 16, 2004 EUObserver reported: "In an exclusive interview with the EUobserver, the former Danish prime minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, says that the future member states will give a much needed shot in the arm to the EU's goal of becoming the most competitive economy in the world by 2010 - its so-called Lisbon strategy.

Mr Rasmussen, who has just published a new paper on the Lisbon strategy for the European socialist group and helped set up the strategy, said, "enlargement will be a wake-up call to the old member states". Furthermore, he believes that implementing the Lisbon strategy will help the new member states to integrate into the EU. Lisbon will be "a very dynamic tool to make sure new member states are integrated into the EU in a good way", said the former prime minister.

The prevailing attitude towards the Lisbon strategy is that member states are not doing enough to implement reforms that will enable the EU to hit its targets. In a report published ahead of a summit on economic reform in late March, the European Commission seemed to give up on the goals, saying, "The Union cannot catch up on the United States as our per capita GDP is 72 percent of our American partner's".

He reserves high praise for the Irish EU presidency, describing its work as "excellent" and adding, "I really have good hopes for the March summit. If the leaders of the governments follow the Irish presidency's approach, we could really have good hopes for this March summit".

And he warns, "If we continue with the tempo we have for the moment, we will not reach the goals we decided on at Lisbon". However, for Mr Rasmussen, there is no question of changing the targets or pushing them back in any way. "I would warn right now against trying to push out the goals", he said. "Let's really stick together to the goals we defined in the year 2000 in Lisbon and realize the goals, otherwise I fear it could be an excuse for not doing anything".

*L. Jim Tuck, Pastor
UCGIA Oakland, San Jose, Stockton, and Santa Rosa
ljtuc@msn.com*