



PROPHETIC TIMES

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'BIN LADEN' OFFERS EUROPE TRUCE

April 15, 2004 The BBC News reported: Two Arab TV channels have broadcast an audiotape said to be from Osama Bin Laden in which he offers Europe a truce if it "stops attacking Muslims". But the speaker in the tape, aired by al-Arabiya and al-Jazeera satellite channels, said the offer would not be extended to the US.

The person on the tape also vowed to avenge Israel's killing of Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The CIA says analysis suggests the voice is likely to be Bin Laden's. The voice on the tape said that "the door is open" for about three months to forge a truce, although this could be extended. The truce would begin when "the last soldier" leaves "our countries", it added.

However, Spain, Britain, Germany and the European Commission have all rejected such a move, with EC President Romano Prodi saying there was "no possibility for negotiation under [a] terrorist threat".

The tape also refers to the 11 March bombings in the Spanish capital, Madrid, and the events of 11 September 2001. It said the attacks were payment for US and Spanish actions in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Palestinian territories. "What happened on 11 September and 11 March are your goods returned to you, so that you know security is a necessity for all," the voice said. "Stop spilling our blood so we can stop spilling your blood."

Spain has been a prominent member of the US-led coalition in Iraq, although its new prime minister has said Spanish troops could be withdrawn if the situation in Iraq does not improve.

BBC diplomatic correspondent Bridget Kendall says the timing of the tape's release - if it is Osama Bin Laden - is significant, emerging shortly after US President George W Bush gave a major news conference defending US policies on Iraq and met Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Washington.

The tape, she says, could be a propaganda attempt to counter what the US has said about events in the Middle East and Iraq. It may also be attempting to exploit divisions between European nations and the US and drive a wedge between both sides at a time when tensions on both issues are very high, our correspondent says..."

ARAFAT APPROVED ATTACK ON U.S. CONVOY

April 13, 2004 Middle East Newslite reported: "The United States has determined that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat approved an attack on a U.S. embassy convoy in which three Americans were killed in 2003.

U.S. diplomatic sources said a U.S. investigation into the bombing of the embassy convoy in the Gaza Strip in October 2003 pointed to a clear role by Arafat. The sources said Arafat granted approval to a plan to strike U.S. interests in PA areas.

Arafat, the sources said, did not draft or approve any details for a Palestinian attack. But they said Arafat agreed to a proposal relayed by a high-level aide for the Palestinians to "pass a message" to the United States.

According to the sources, a senior Arafat aide and member of the Fatah Central Committee left Gaza City for Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah in September 2003 to seek approval for a Palestinian attack on U.S. interests in the area. The Fatah official, described as a liaison between Arafat and Palestinian insurgents in the Gaza Strip, complained of U.S. policy toward the PA and Arabs."

IRAN USES HAMAS, HIZBULLAH IN IRAQ

April 13, 2004 The Middle East Newslite reported: "Iran has been using Hamas and Hizbullah as part of plans to impose Teheran's authority in Iraq.

A report by the New York-based Hudson Institute said Iran has been sponsoring and cooperating with a range of Shi'ite insurgency groups in an effort to develop a power base in Iraq. The Shi'ites have been employed to work against U.S. interests and intimidate independent figures within the majority Shi'ite community in Iraq.

"Following the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, the Iranian clerical dictatorship has mounted a covert effort to establish an allied Shi'a Islamist extremist regime in Iraq," the report, by senior fellow Constantine Menges, said. "Iran has been preparing to do this for many years and has recruited political, military, and covert agent assets among the hundreds of thousands of Shi'a Iraqis who fled Iraq and have lived in Iran for years."

The report said Iran has tried to dominate Iraq in several ways. Menges cited Iran's use of Iraqi Shi'ite clerics, the establishment of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the cooperation with Shi'ite cleric Moqtada Sadr and the use of Hizbullah and Hamas for insurgency attacks on Iraq."

IRAN LEADER SEES U.S. 'VULNERABLE' IN IRAQ

April 12, 2004, World Net Daily reported: "Providing yet more evidence that Iran is actively supporting the Shiite guerrilla forces battling the U.S.-led coalition, former Iranian President Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani said the American military forces are vulnerable, describing them as a "wounded monster," and suggesting defeat would provide a "valuable lesson" for the West.

Rafsanjani, chairman of the powerful Expediency Council in Iran, says America's vulnerability in Iraq makes Iran stronger. During Friday prayers, broadcast live by Iranian radio, Rafsanjani said deep relations between the people of Iran and the people of Iraq are causing problems for America.

"America had entered the region in order to set up a base right outside our borders, but such a base will no longer materialize," he said. "We have small accounts with the Americans which we must settle one day and bring the issue to a close". Rafsanjani praised Moqtada Al-Sadr's "heroic" Mahdi militia.

"Contrary to those terrorist groups in Iraq, there are also strong bodies which contribute to the security of that nation," Rafsanjani said. "Among them is the Mahdi Army, comprising many enthusiastic and heroic young people who were unhappy both with Saddam and the Americans, as well as other issues"

Rafsanjani's candid speech confirms earlier reports in WorldNetDaily showing Iran is deeply involved in the Iraqi uprising and has been planning it for more than a year. Rafsanjani added that if the U.S. is defeated in Iraq, the Americans would not soon return to the region..."

U.S. URGED TO SHUT DOWN ALGERIA, EGYPT NUKES

April 10, 2004 The Middle East Newline reported: "The Bush administration has been pressed to launch a diplomatic campaign to scale down the nuclear programs of Egypt and Algeria.

The effort has been proposed as Algeria completed its first open presidential elections and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak prepares for a summit in the United States next week. The issue of the nuclear programs of the two North African states was said to have been recently discussed in the State Department and White House as part of a U.S. review of its relations with Algiers and Cairo.

The first public appeal for such a U.S. effort came during a congressional hearing last week. A leading nonproliferation analyst warned of the growing nuclear capability of Algeria and Egypt and the prospect that the latter might assemble nuclear weapons.

"Build on the successful precedent of Libya's nuclear renunciation by getting its neighbors, starting with Algeria, to shut down their largest nuclear facilities," Henry Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, said."

MYSTERIOUS BSE-LIKE DISEASE FOUND IN SHEEP

April 8, 2004 NewScientist.com news service reported: "A massive research program to find out whether BSE is circulating in British sheep has turned up its first suspicious result. But while scientists say the sheep did not have conventional BSE, they cannot rule out the possibility that it could have had a new form of mad cow disease that has adapted to sheep.

Britain's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has announced that the Veterinary Laboratories Agency in Weybridge, England, had found "a type of scrapie not previously seen in the UK". Scrapie is a sheep disease similar to BSE which is not generally thought to harm people.

DEFRA said the disease-causing prion detected in the sheep's brain "had some characteristics similar to experimental BSE in sheep", but that on other tests it resembled neither BSE nor "previously recognized types of scrapie".

The UK's Food Standards Agency said in a statement: "Uncertainties still remain on this issue. However, based on the best scientific evidence to date, we are not advising against eating lamb and sheep meat."

There have long been fears that sheep which ate cattle-derived meat and bone meal during Britain's BSE epidemic in the 1980s might have acquired BSE, although they have never been confirmed.

Unlike BSE in cattle, prion diseases spread directly from sheep to sheep. So any BSE in sheep could still be circulating despite subsequent bans on animal-derived feed.

Furthermore, sheep experimentally fed BSE develop a disease indistinguishable from ordinary scrapie, making detection very difficult. Yet the prion from such animals still behaves like BSE, and could cause the fatal human disease vCJD."

Compiled by L. Jim Tuck, Pastor

UCGIA Oakland, San Jose, Stockton, and Santa Rosa

ljtuc@msn.com