

PROPHETIC TIMES

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IRAN'S DEFENSE INDUSTRY USED FOR NUKES

June 17, 2004 Middle East Newline reported: "Iran's defense industry has been employed to produce components for the nation's nuclear weapons program. For the first time, Iranian officials outlined the role of Teheran's state-owned defense industry in manufacturing centrifuges for uranium enrichment. The enrichment of uranium is regarded as a key element in the production of nuclear weapons.

"It's natural in the world that defense industries produce civilian parts," Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani said. "We in the defense industries produce parts for civilian planes, vehicle parts and even television sets. We have also produced some parts for Iran's nuclear energy program including P-1."

The Pak-1, or P-1, centrifuge, was sold by a network led by Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. The defense minister said Iran has not yet manufactured the more advanced P-2 centrifuge. Officials said Iran already has blueprints of the P-2."

EU LEADERS DEADLOCKED ON CANDIDATE FOR TOP JOB

June 17, 2004 The Voice of America reported: "European Union leaders will try again Friday to agree on who should head the EU's executive body after extended late night talks that ended in deadlock. An EU summit is also engaged in negotiations to agree on a constitution for the enlarged 25-member bloc.

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, told reporters that none of the candidates who have been mentioned to succeed outgoing European Commission president Romano Prodi has been able to obtain enough support from EU leaders.

"The presidency will make a proposal when they think that there is a name that would command sufficient support," he said. "We're not in that position. I have eight or nine names. I know, because I've talked to all my colleagues, that none of them at this stage would command sufficient support to get a qualified majority voting."

Mr. Ahern says that, as soon as he thinks one of the candidates is acceptable to a majority of the EU members, he will formally submit his name to a vote.

France and Germany have been campaigning hard for Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt as the EU's top official, but he has been rejected by Britain, Italy and Poland because of his strong opposition to the Iraq war and, also, because Britain considers him to be a staunch proponent of a federal Europe.

The center-right bloc in the European Parliament, which holds the biggest number of seats there, has proposed Chris Patten, the EU's External Relations Commissioner, for the top job. But France opposes him because his country, Britain, does not share the EU's single currency or take part in its open border regime. The same criticism has been leveled at Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Danish Prime Minister, whose country also does not use the single currency.

If most leaders had their way, they would select Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker. But he has ruled himself out. Others being mentioned are the head of the European Parliament, Pat Cox, of Ireland, and the EU's Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner, Antonio Vitorino, of Portugal. But neither of them have managed to garner enough support among the leaders.

Mr. Ahern said earlier that EU leaders are also narrowing their differences over a draft constitution for the bloc but that serious differences remain, especially over the thorny question of how much voting weight each individual member state will have. Poland and Spain continue to oppose a proportional voting system that would effectively reduce the disproportionate say they now enjoy.

The document was drafted two years ago in an effort to streamline the EU's cumbersome decision-making process, now that it has 25 members. Those negotiations, like the search for a new head of the European Commission, will continue on Friday."

CONSTITUTION REMAINS GOD-LESS

June 13, 2004 The Euobserver reported: "The European Constitution will remain without a reference to Christianity, under new proposals by the Irish EU Presidency. In a paper dealing with eleventh-hour issues circulated to governments on Sunday (12 June), Dublin moderates the lengthy preamble to the Constitution but does not add any reference to God or Christianity. The preamble keeps the wording "drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe".

Dublin's decision follows strong pressure from Belgium, in particular, but also France to keep the text free from any specific religious references. Both countries are lay states and argued that a separate article in the Constitution anchoring the status and role of churches is enough.

But it will be a blow for countries such as Poland and Italy, who along with five other member states, recently sent a letter to the Presidency on issue. "This issue remains a priority for our Governments, but also for many representatives of the European Parliament and of National Parliaments, as well as for millions of European citizens", said the letter sent last month.

Referring to the paper, an Irish diplomat said "we don't believe it will be possible to get a consensus on the issue; that is why we haven't proposed anything". However, the diplomat did not rule out that the issue will be left to EU leaders to deal with at the end of the week.

The Irish have also cut down the wordy preamble to the Constitution drawn up alone by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the architect of the treaty. The quote by Greek philosopher Thucydides, which Mr Giscard inserted at the beginning of preamble, has been unceremoniously dropped as has the wordy first paragraph on Europe bringing forth civilization. However, they stopped far short of a Finnish proposal - made last year - to scrap the whole thing, and most of it remains. "He [Mr Giscard] should still be happy that 90% of his magnum opus remains", remarked an EU diplomat dryly."

U.S. EXPECTS EXODUS FROM SAUDI ARABIA

June 16, 2004 The Middle East Newslite reported: "The Bush administration expects an American exodus from Saudi Arabia. U.S. officials said thousands of Americans are either leaving or planning to leave the kingdom over the next few weeks. They said the families of Americans employed in Saudi Arabia's defense and energy sectors would leave imminently for the summer and could be followed by the workers themselves.

The administration has been holding talks with Saudi leaders over the last few days to determine the extent of their protection for the estimated 25,000 Americans in the kingdom. In wake of the talks, officials said, the administration has quietly determined that Saudi authorities were either unable or unwilling to protect Americans employed in the kingdom.

Over the last week, two U.S. defense executives were killed by Al Qaida in Riyadh. A third U.S. defense contractor was abducted by Al Qaida."

VATICAN SUMMIT AIMS TO COMBAT THREAT OF 'ALTERNATIVE' RELIGIONS

June 16, 2004 Peter Popham in Rome reported: "Catholics from more than 25 countries are in Rome this week to hammer out a strategy for combating the threat posed to Christianity by "New Age" religions and fads. "Astrologers believe that the Age of Pisces - known to them as the Christian age - is drawing to a close," explained an exhaustive report on the New Age produced by the Catholic church last year. And as priests around the world watch their congregations dwindle through boredom or plain disbelief, the Church believes that the moment has come to fight back.

Monsignor Peter Fleetwood, one of the authors of the report, said those at the closed-door conference include priests and lay people from Latin America "worried that they can be pushed out by something that has come from abroad", and from Asia where "a lot of traditional religions are reviving".

But for Fleetwood the greatest challenge may be in England and North America, "where the New Age began ... and where it has become such a part of everyday life that we don't notice it". That makes it harder to attack, he says: "Where one sees a threat, it's easier to battle it." This is an enemy with dozens of heads: the version of the Jewish kabbalah espoused by Madonna, the Enneagram personality-reading cult, ancient Egyptian occult practices, Sufism, the lore of the Druids, Celtic Christianity, medieval alchemy, Renaissance hermeticism, Yoga, Zen Buddhism, and many more..."

While one of the two "pontifical councils" involved in taking up the challenge is that for "inter-religious dialogue", suggesting that the New Agers be dealt with on a similar footing to Muslims, Jews, and indeed Anglicans, the Pope himself appears to see the issue as a simple matter of right and wrong.

"We cannot delude ourselves," he says, that "this return of ancient Gnostic ideas" "will lead toward a renewal of religion." It is, he said, "a way of distorting His Word ... in distinct, if not declared, conflict with all that is essentially Christian".

The time for a decisive battle is clearly fast approaching. And the message to faithful in the report is plain: quit "shopping around in the world's fair of religious proposals."