

PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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FORMER FRENCH MINISTER 'FRIGHTENED' BY EU CONSTITUTION

August 26, 2004 The EUobserver reported: "A French former minister has said that he is "truly frightened" by the new European Constitution. In an interview with Le Figaro, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who is a socialist and former interior and defense minister of France, condemned the text for being too economically liberal and in the area of common foreign and security policy of being a tool of "vassalisation to the US".

Mr Chevènement said the treaty "would prevent all autonomous defense policy". All common defense will have to be "compatible with the security policy contained within the framework of NATO", said the former minister. "Moreover, the principle of reinforced co-operation between countries is subject to the agreement of the council and the European Parliament. The hope for a flexible Europe has therefore been nipped in the bud", said Mr Chevènement.

He repeated his hope that the Constitution will be turned down by French citizens in next year's referendum by saying that he was certain that among the 25 countries concerned, some will reject the text. "I hope France is one of them", said Mr Chevènement. The former minister also lashed out at France's dwindling influence in the newly enlarged European Union.

"France is marginalized. A Europe of 25 automatically means a majority for governments most subservient to the United States"..."

SYRIA PUSHES ISLAMISTS TO IRAQ

August 26, 2004 The Middle East Newslines reported: "The regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad has pursued a policy of exporting Islamic unrest to neighboring Iraq.

Islamic sources in contact with opposition groups in Syria said the Assad regime has encouraged Islamic insurgents to relocate in Iraq and fight the U.S.-led coalition in that country. The sources said Assad has assured these insurgents safe passage to and from Iraq in an effort to prevent Islamic unrest in his country.

Sheik Omar Bakri Mohammed, a Syrian native and Islamic exile in London, said Assad's policy has been successful. Mohammed, founder of the Al Qaida-inspired Al Muhajiroun, pointed out that Islamic insurgents have not attacked the Syrian regime in about 20 years. In June, Syria reported an Islamic attack in Damascus, but Western intelligence agencies have raised doubts.

"That is because they [Islamic insurgents] are busy elsewhere, particularly in Iraq," Mohammed said in an interview to the Washington-based Jamestown Foundation."

IRAN COULD DEVELOP BOMB IN 2005

August 26, 2004 The Middle East Newslines reported: "Iran could complete development of its first nuclear weapon in 2005. U.S. officials and analysts said Iran has accelerated its nuclear weapons program and could achieve a breakthrough over the next year. They said Iran has determined that it could enrich a sufficient amount of uranium by late 2005.

Undersecretary of State John Bolton said Teheran has told Britain, France and Germany that Iran could enrich enough uranium for a nuclear weapon within a year. Bolton said Teheran has developed programs for the production of plutonium as well as enriched uranium. He said Iran has constructed a large underground facility meant to house up to 50,000 gas centrifuges.

"If we permit Iran's deception to go on much longer, it will be too late," Bolton told the Hudson Institute on Aug. 17. "Iran will have nuclear weapons."

HUMAN CHIPS MORE THAN SKIN-DEEP

August 24, 2004 CNET News.com reported: "There's not a lot of middle ground on the subject of implanting electronic identification chips in humans. Advocates of technologies like radio frequency identification tags say their potentially life-saving benefits far outweigh any Orwellian concerns about privacy. RFID tags sewn into clothing or even embedded under people's skin could curb identity theft, help identify disaster victims and improve medical care, they say.

Critics, however, say such technologies would make it easier for government agencies to track a person's every movement and allow widespread invasion of privacy. Abuse could take countless other forms, including corporations surreptitiously identifying shoppers for relentless sales pitches. Critics also speculate about a day when people's possessions will be tagged--allowing nosy subway riders with the right technology to examine the contents of nearby purses and backpacks.

"Invasion of privacy is going to be impossible to avoid," said Katherine Albrecht, the founder and director of Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering, or CASPIAN, a watchdog group created to monitor the use of data collected in the so-called loyalty programs used increasingly by supermarkets. Albrecht worries about a day when "every physical item is registered to its owner."

The overriding idea behind tagging people with chips--whether through implants or wearable devices such as bracelets--is to improve identification and, consequently, tighten access to restricted information or physical areas.

But on top of civil liberties and other policy issues, such technologies face visceral objections from many people who frown on the idea of being implanted with tags that can track them like migrating tuna. Complaints have led several companies to abandon plans to use RFID technologies in products, much less in human bodies..."

SCIENTISTS TO CREATE FIRST ARTIFICIAL CORNEA

August 24, 2004 The Sydney Morning Herald reported: "British scientists are hoping to become the first in the world to create an artificial cornea to save millions from blindness. Researchers from Lancaster University and Sheffield University hope to succeed where other teams have failed in the race to produce the implant, which could help millions of people suffering from cornea disease. The project has now received a \$1.08 million grant from the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council to fund the work.

Around 10 million people around the world suffer from blindness caused by cornea disease. Of these, up to half do not have access to conventional transplantation methods using donated human corneas. In some countries, such as India and China, people are reluctant to donate body parts, and even in the UK patients can wait several months for a donor cornea to be found. Nigel Fullwood, from Lancaster's biological sciences department, hopes they can develop the artificial cornea within five years.

The cornea is the transparent, outer window of the eye, measuring just half a millimetre thick. It acts as a powerful lens which focuses light onto the retina. Cornea disease, which can lead to blindness, can be caused by genetic conditions, the effects of ultra violet, infections and accidents.

While cornea transplants are very successful in large numbers of patients, not all conditions are treatable this way. This led the British scientists to look at new ways of restoring sight without the need to use donated corneas. Fullwood said that people had been trying for years to produce an artificial cornea that was as good as a conventional transplant, but without success.

"We are using a new approach," he said. "The cornea will be made from a uniquely formulated hydrogel - a polymer which has a high water content - the sort of material that soft contact lenses are made from.

"We will modify it so that it can be inserted in the same way as a conventional cornea transplant and will become fully integrated into the eye". "If we succeed, instead of waiting for a donor cornea you will be able to get one off the shelf - in a similar way a plastic lens is used in a cataract operation." Fullwood said they hoped to be able to enter clinical trials with the artificial corneas after three years..."

IRAQI DESERTION RATE EXCEEDS 80%

August 22, 2004 Middle East Newslines reported: "Iraq's security forces, ordered to prepare for an offensive against the Mahdi Army in Najaf, have been plagued by a desertion rate that exceeded 80 percent.

A U.S. report warned that Iraqi Interior Ministry troops remain unprepared to fight Shi'ite or Sunni insurgents and could not be deemed reliable. The report, published before the current showdown in Najaf, said the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, renamed the Iraqi National Guard, has not been trained to fight insurgents armed with rocket-propelled grenades and heavy weapons.

"Effective Iraqi security forces are critical for transitioning security responsibilities to Iraq," the Government Accounting Office, the investigative arm of the Congress, said in a report. "However, Iraqi security forces proved unready to take over security responsibilities from the multinational force, as demonstrated by their collapse during April 2004."

The United States was said to have spent \$1.2 billion in developing Iraq's security forces, which now number around 220,000. The Iraqi units include the military, police and Interior Ministry forces."

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