



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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U.S. SETS SAUDI STABILITY AS PRIORITY

December 2, 2004 Middle East Newline reported: "The U.S. military has set the stability of Saudi Arabia as a key goal in 2005.

U.S. officials said the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have determined that the stability of Saudi Arabia would be a priority over the next year. They said Saudi stability and improved U.S. relations with Riyadh were vital for Gulf regional security and American interests in the Middle East.

The U.S. agenda has been relayed to Saudi Arabia by both the Pentagon and military. Officials said that over the next few months the Bush administration would seek to accelerate efforts to improve military and security cooperation with Riyadh. During his visit to Riyadh over the weekend, U.S. Central Command chief Gen. John Abizaid discussed plans to expand military cooperation with Saudi Arabia. Abizaid said the top priorities of the U.S. military in 2005 included U.S. help to Saudi Arabia for the war against Al Qaida..."



ZAPPED HUMAN EGGS DIVIDE WITHOUT SPERM

December 2, 2004 NewScientist.com reported: "A trick that persuades human eggs to divide as if they have been fertilized could provide a source of embryonic stem cells that sidesteps ethical objections to existing techniques. It could also be deployed to improve the success rate of IVF.

"Embryos" created by the procedure do not contain any paternal chromosomes – just two sets of chromosomes from the mother – and so cannot develop into babies. This should remove the ethical objections that some people have to harvesting from donated human embryos. There are high hopes that stem cells, which can develop into many different cell types, could be used to

treat a range of diseases.

The tricked eggs divide for four or five days until they reach 50 to 100 cells – the blastocyst stage. These blastocysts should in theory yield stem cells, but because they are parthenogenetic – produced from the egg only – they cannot be viewed as a potential human life, says Karl Swann of the University of Wales College of Medicine in Cardiff, UK.

"This could eliminate one of the main sources of ethical controversy in this research," says Bob Lanza, head of research at the cloning company Advanced Cell Technology in Worcester, Massachusetts..."

SYRIA ACKNOWLEDGES HOLDING IRAQI FUNDS

December 1, 2004 Middle East Newline: "Syria has acknowledged that its banks were holding funds of the former Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq.

But the regime of President Bashar Assad has disputed the assertion by U.S. officials that Syria was harboring about \$3 billion in Saddam funds. Instead, Syria has maintained that its Iraqi assets did not exceed \$300 million.

The Assad regime has frozen funds from the former Iraqi government, officials said. Dureid Dirgham, director of the Syrian Commercial Bank, said the Iraqi government deposited \$216 million in the financial institution.

"No former Iraqi officials have private accounts in this bank," Dirgham was quoted by the official Syrian News Agency as saying..."

EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION FACES FIRST BIG TEST

November 30, 2004 EUobserver.com reported: "The first potential pitfall in the long and difficult road towards ratifying the European Constitution will come on Wednesday (1 December) as French Socialists decide in an internal referendum whether to campaign for a "yes" or a "no" to the proposed Treaty. The stakes are high. A Socialist "no" to the Treaty could tip the balance in a country whose voters are marginally in favour of the Constitution (60-40). If France

votes "no", many have warned that the EU will be plunged into crisis.

On a recent visit to Britain, French President Jacques Chirac warned that France could reject the Treaty if the Socialists decide to campaign against it. On the other hand, a Socialist "yes" makes a French "yes" much more likely and may embolden Mr Chirac to hold a general referendum on the Treaty as early as May next year.

Leaders from Brussels and around the EU will be keeping a nervous eye on the result – expected on Thursday morning.

The leaders of Germany, Spain and the Czech Republic have already published an open letter in *Le Monde*, urging the Socialists to say yes to the Constitution..."

TERROR EXPERT: QAIDA WMD ATTACK ON U.S. LIKELY SOON

November 29, 2004 The Jerusalem Post reported: "An al-Qaida attack on the US with non-conventional weapons is virtually "inevitable," and the organization is likely "tying up the knots" for such an attack, Yossef Bodansky, former director of the US Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, told *The Jerusalem Post* on Sunday.

"All of the warnings we have today indicate that a major strike – something more horrible than anything we've seen before – is all but inevitable," he said. Bodansky, here for the second annual Jerusalem Summit, an international gathering of conservative thinkers, added that "the primary option" for the next al-Qaida attack on US soil would be one that would use weapons of mass destruction.

"I do not have a crystal ball, but this is what all the available evidence tells us, we will have a bang," Bodansky said. He said that al-Qaida has not carried out a second major attack on the US until now for internal psychological and ideological reasons, but after the reelection of President George W. Bush, it has gotten "the green light" to do so from leading Islamic religious luminaries, as well as from "the elites of the Arab world."

According to Bodansky's reading of Osama bin Laden's mind-set, after the elaborate attacks of 9/11 there was no need for the "bin Ladens of the world" to carry out a second major attack in the US, both because the target audience of the attacks – the Arab and Islamic world – had gotten the message that America could be penetrated, and because a second attack would necessarily have to be more grandiose.

Following the attacks and the US-led war on terror, a debate started within the operational arm of the organization over the potential use of weapons of mass destruction, Bodansky said. If, in pre-9/11 days, the theme used by bin Laden was that perpetual confrontation and jihad against the US was the only way to protect Islam, the argument now used is the ability to punish American society, Bodansky said.

"Just as the West was challenging the quintessence of Islam by means of the globalization era, there was a parallel need by Islamic extremists to strike at – and hurt – the core of American society, this time with weapons of mass destruction," Bodansky said.

A subsequent theological debate emerged within the organization, and its supporters in the Arab world, he said, over whether the mass killing of innocents is permissible.

While bin Laden and his associates argued that by virtue of their participation in US democracy, US citizens were enabling their rulers to fight, other Islamic luminaries contended that this does not permit such massive attacks, Bodansky said. The reelection of Bush in November, he said, was viewed by bin Laden and his cohorts as a decisive answer to this deliberation, with Americans now "choosing" to be the enemies of Islam. In bin Laden's mind-set, he said, the stage was set for a non-conventional attack.

Bodansky said that while there may still be some vestiges of debate and doubt within Islamic circles, he believes that planing for such an attack is finished. "They got the kosher stamp from the Islamic world to use nuclear weapons," he said.

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