



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

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US INCREASES PRESSURE ON DAMASCUS

February 17, 2005 BBC News reported: "The US says it has "an increasing list of problems" with Syria, hours after Damascus formed a "front" with Iran. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told a Senate hearing that she had withdrawn the US ambassador to Syria to send a strong signal of displeasure. Ambassador Margaret Scobey was first pulled out of Damascus for talks, but there is now no date for her return. Washington insists Syria's problems are not just with the US, but with the whole international community.

Tension has increased since former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, who had called for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from the country, was killed in a bomb attack in Beirut on Monday. Syria and Iran, which is also under pressure from the US, said on Wednesday that they would co-operate more closely to meet challenges and threats.

Ms Rice told senators that ambassador Scobey had been withdrawn from Damascus for an "indeterminate" time as a sign of strong US displeasure with Syria following the apparent assassination of Mr Hariri. "The proximate cause was Lebanon, but unfortunately we have an increasing list of problems with Syria," she told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee..."

GCC WOULD BE FIRST VICTIM OF IRANIAN NUKES

February 17, 2005 The Middle East Newslite reported: "Gulf Arab states would be the first victims of Iran's nuclear weapons program, a study said. A report by the Gulf Research Center said Gulf Cooperation Council states would come under threat by Iranian nuclear weapons and seek closer cooperation with the United States. The study by the Dubai-based think tank said GCC members, despite their fear of Teheran, would refuse to help any U.S. effort to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities.



"The GCC states along with their people would potentially be the first victims and the main targets of the political and military repercussions that might arise once Teheran steps through the gates of the nuclear club," said the report entitled "The Probable Attitude of the GCC States towards the Scenario of a Military Action against Iran's Nuclear Facilities." "This development has certainly prompted a radical and permanent shift in the regional balance of power."

The report, authored by researcher Mustafa Alani, said GCC states have avoided any declaration on Iran's nuclear program out of concern of harming relations with Teheran. Alani said GCC states feel impotent in stopping either Iran's or Israel's nuclear program..."

N. KOREA NUKES ESTIMATED AS HIGH AS 15

February 16, 2005 Newsday.com reported: "Defense Intelligence Agency analysts believe North Korea may already have produced as many as 15 nuclear weapons, according to a DIA official. "A dozen to 15, tops," said the official, who asked to not be further identified.

Another intelligence official who works for a separate agency said the DIA's estimate is at the high end of a recent intelligence community-wide assessment of North Korea's nuclear arsenal. The CIA, he said, lowballed the estimate at two to three bombs while the Department of Energy's analysis put it somewhere in between. Before the recent assessment, the upper number from the intelligence community had been eight to nine.

If the DIA's estimates are accurate, they reflect a belief that North Korea has steadily increased the production of bombs during the first four years of the Bush administration. The large discrepancies between the estimates also reflect uncertainties about the size of the bombs and whether North Korea has begun producing some from highly enriched uranium, a process the country is believed to have acquired in 2002..."

REESTABLISHED SANHEDRIN CONVENES TO DISCUSS TEMPLE

February 15, 2005 Arutz Sheva reported: "The re-established "Sanhedrin" convened to hold its monthly meeting this week, with the question of the Holy Temple's precise location the main topic on the agenda. The recently re-established Sanhedrin - ideally, Judaism's top legal assembly - of 71 rabbis and scholars also moved to solidify logistical aspects of the body.

The Sanhedrin heard expert testimony on the various opinions as to the exact part of the Temple Mount upon which the Holy Temple stood. The fact that there has never been an archaeological expedition or dig on the Temple Mount, coupled with continuous Muslim efforts to destroy historical evidence of the Holy Temple at the site, have made determining the exact location difficult.

Identifying the spot on which the Temple stood is a matter of controversy among scholars, and has serious ramifications for those wishing to visit the Temple Mount. It is also critical for the renewal of the Passover sacrifice, and ultimately for the building of the third and final Holy Temple. While numerous opinions have been expressed throughout the years, and while several of them were

expressed at the Sanhedrin gathering this week, the two main opinions state that the Temple stood either on the spot currently occupied by the gold-topped Dome of the Rock, or just to the north of that spot. An opinion that the Temple stood south of that spot, approximately behind the present-day Western Wall, was also presented - though most scholars basically discount it.

The opinion that it is impossible to determine the site of the Temple without prophecy was also presented. The opinions were delivered by rabbis, professors and archaeologists, all experts in the matter of the Temple Mount. A final presentation on the matter will be given to the Sanhedrin by a subcommittee now in formation. The subcommittee will thoroughly examine the various opinions, and present its findings to the Sanhedrin, which is then to make a decision on whether the site can be determined.

"It is appropriate that the Sanhedrin convened to discuss this lofty matter [of the Temple's location] this week," Sanhedrin spokesman Rabbi Chaim Richman told Arutz-7's Ezra HaLevi, "as the Torah portion is Terumah - the portion of the Bible which begins to deal with the preparations for the Tabernacle. Though seemingly esoteric, the preparations for building a Tabernacle and the Temple are at the center of who we are as a people."

Richman also said that it was heartening to see that despite talk of withdrawal from parts of the Land of Israel, and despite Prime Minister Sharon's declaration that Israel has "given up its dreams," the Sanhedrin continues to move toward strengthening the nation of Israel. "As all these things happen all around us," Rabbi Richman said, "the Sanhedrin is researching ways to renew the deepest roots of our faith - to renew Temple service, reunite Jewish legal tradition and inspire the Jewish people to aspire to greatness. Our people have one path before us, and we will continue to march toward our destiny..."

NEW AIDS STRAIN DISCOVERED IN US



February 14, 2005 VOA News reported: "U.S. public health officials say an unidentified New York City man has been diagnosed with a new HIV strain that has so far not responded to any anti-AIDS drugs. The unidentified man in his mid-40's became infected with a drug resistant form of the virus that causes AIDS after having unprotected sex with other men while using crystal methamphetamine, an addictive stimulant.

New York City Health Commissioner Thomas Frieden said officials know little else about the man. "We don't know for certain precisely when he was infected although further laboratory tests may shed light on that. And we don't know how he will do in the future," he said. Officials say they don't know how many people the man may have infected. He was diagnosed with what turned out to be the drug resistant strain of HIV in late 2004 after years of having unprotected anal sex with other men. Health officials say they've tried three commonly prescribed drugs on the man without success. He is now receiving a fourth drug.

Infectious diseases specialist Jay Dobkin of the State University of New York worries that HIV could again become an unmanageable disease. "Many of us up here remember the dark days before there was any effective treatment for HIV. And I think the case... should be a reminder that those days could come back," he said..."

EARTH TO MARS IN A MONTH WITH PAINTED SOLAR SAIL

February 12, 2005 Space.Com "Gregory Benford, professor of physics at UC Irvine (and noted science fiction author) believes that a spacecraft powered by a special kind of solar sail could reach Mars in just one month.

Dr. Benford and his brother James were testing a very thin carbon-mesh sail, using microwaves as the energy source for propulsion. Unexpectedly, the sail experienced a force considerably greater than predicted. They theorized that the heat from the microwave beam was causing carbon monoxide gas to escape from the sail's surface; the recoil from the escaping molecules provided what could be a useful adjunct to the propulsive force experienced by light sails.

They believe that by beaming microwave energy up from Earth to boil off volatile molecules from a specially formulated paint applied to the sail will provide enough added force to propel a spacecraft to Mars in record time. "It's a different way of thinking about propulsion," Gregory Benford says. "We leave the engine on the ground." Their research will be published this month in the journal *Acta Astronautica*.

This is how it would work: a rocket would take the craft to low-Earth orbit, whereupon the craft would unfurl a 100 meter diameter sail. A transmitter on Earth would fire a one-hour burst of microwaves at it to heat it up, accelerating the craft to 60 kilometres per second. This would set an interplanetary speed record for space probes.

However, more work is needed to make this possible. The plan would require a 60-megawatt microwave beam with a similar diameter as the sail that was capable of tracking the craft. The deep-space communications network that NASA uses to communicate with Mars rovers and the Cassini probe now orbiting Saturn can only output half a megawatt..."

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