



PROPHETIC TIMES

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IRAN 'WILL HARM U.S. INTERESTS IF ATTACKED'

April 27, 2006 CNN reported: "Iran has vowed to strike at U.S. interests worldwide if it is attacked by the United States, which is keeping military options open in case diplomacy fails to curb Tehran's nuclear program.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made the threat on Wednesday, two days before the U.N. nuclear watchdog reports on whether Iran is meeting Security Council demands to halt uranium enrichment.

Iran says it will not stop enrichment, which it says is purely for civilian purposes and not part of what the United States says is a clandestine effort to make atomic bombs.

"The Americans should know that if they assault Iran their interests will be harmed anywhere in the world that is possible," Khamenei was quoted as saying by state television. "The Iranian nation will respond to any blow with double the intensity," he said.

Washington, backed by Britain and France, has been pushing for sanctions if, as it expects, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports that Iran has flouted U.N. demands.

But Russia and China, the U.N. Security Council's other two veto-holding permanent members, oppose any embargo.

Iran's nuclear energy head, Gholamreza Aghazadeh, held talks with IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei in Vienna on Wednesday. "The talks were encouraging," Mohammad Saeedi, deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, told Reuters, adding the two sides discussed ways to resolve outstanding issues with the IAEA. He gave no details..."

IRAN THREATENS TO HIDE NUCLEAR PROGRAM

April 26, 2006 SpaceWar.com reported: "Iran warned Tuesday it will sever relations with the UN atomic watchdog if sanctions are imposed over its nuclear drive and vowed a military attack would merely send its activities underground.

The tough rhetoric triggered accusations from the White House that Iran was seeking to escalate the standoff ahead of a UN deadline Friday for the Islamic regime to freeze uranium enrichment.

"It's time for the Security Council to look at the next step," White House spokesman Scott McLellan said. "It's time for the Security Council to look at what action needs to be taken for this regime's continued defiance."

Although Tehran has so far refused to comply with the demands, diplomats in Vienna said Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation chief Gholam Reza Aghazadeh would hold last-minute talks Wednesday with the UN's nuclear watchdog.

The meetings are behind held ahead of a report from the International Atomic Energy Agency director general Mohamed ElBaradei, which McLellan said the White House expected "will show that the regime remains in non-compliance with its obligations."

The IAEA has been investigating Iran for more than three years, and any cut in ties would spell an end to international inspections and monitoring of nuclear facilities inside the Islamic republic...

"If you decide to use sanctions against us, our relations with the agency will be suspended," said the country's national security chief and top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani.

"Military action against Iran will not lead to the closure of the programme," Larijani said. "If you take harsh measures, we will hide this programme. Then you cannot solve the nuclear issue.

He also refused to rule out using oil as a weapon in the worsening standoff, warning of "important consequences" for energy supplies if Iran was subjected to "radical measures".

The fresh barrage of threats came the day after hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad warned that Iran could quit the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but nonetheless confidently dismissed any threat of sanctions or even a US attack.

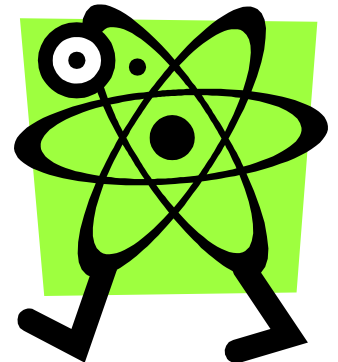
Iran's refusal to comply with the Security Council demand -- as well as its promise to expand enrichment work to reach an industrial-scale capacity -- leaves it exposed to the danger of UN sanctions.

The United States has also not ruled out military action."..."

U.S. SAYS IRAN NEAR NUKE POINT OF NO-RETURN

April 25, 2006 The Middle East Newslite reported: "The Bush administration, in what appeared to be a rebuff to the U.S. intelligence community, has asserted that Iran was approaching the point of indigenous nuclear capability.

Officials said the State Department has determined that Iran has reached or was close to completing the nuclear fuel cycle. They said



this meant that Iran could complete the process that begins with the extraction of uranium from ore, production of feeder gas and the enrichment of uranium to the level required for reactor fuel.

"We are very close to that point of no return," Undersecretary of State Robert Joseph said. "And I think that's a view that was shared -- that is shared by many others."

Joseph, responsible for arms control and international security at the State Department, told an April 21 briefing that the West would soon no longer have the ability to stop Iran's nuclear program. He endorsed Iran's claim of producing 110 tons of uranium hexafluoride, or UF-6, the feeder gas for enrichment in centrifuges.

CHINESE SCIENTISTS CLONE MAD COW-RESISTANT CALF



April 26, 2006 Reuters reported: "Chinese scientists have succeeded in cloning a cow with gene cells resistant to mad cow disease, the official Xinhua news agency said on Wednesday.

The birth of the 55-kg (121-lb) calf in the eastern province of Shandong comes three years after a team led by now-disgraced South Korean scientist Hwang Woo-suk cloned cows with a protein structure resistant to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

"Scientists with the Laiyang Agro-Science Institute in Shandong said they used gene-transplant technology to introduce the genes to the calf cloned from cells of an adult cow," Xinhua said.

The research was led by professors Dong Yajuan and Bo Xuejin -- who succeeded in cloning China's first and second healthy cows in 2001 -- in collaboration with a Japanese university.

State television reported that further tests would be required on the calf as it grows to verify the effectiveness of the transplanted genes."..."

IRAN UNABLE TO BLOCK HORMUZ

April 26, 2006 The Middle East Newline reported: "Iran lacks the capability to block the world's leading shipping route for crude oil exports.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies said the Iranian Navy, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, has failed to procure the platforms or weapons required to block the Straits of Hormuz, the passage for 60 percent of the world's oil trade. In a report, the Washington-based center said the United States could block any Iranian attempt to attack Gulf shipping, particularly from the sea.

"Iran could not close the Strait of Hormuz, or halt tanker traffic, and its submarines and much of its IRGC forces would probably be destroyed in a matter of days if they become operational," the report said.

The assertion undermined an Iranian warning to threaten the global oil trade if attacked by the United States. The warning was issued during the Holy Prophet exercise in the Gulf, which took place from March 31 to April 6."..."

ECONOMISTS CALL FOR POLITICAL UNION TO PREVENT EURO COLLAPSE

April 24, 2006 The EU Observer reported: "Prominent Belgian economist Paul de Grauwe has argued the euro is bound to collapse in 10 to 20 years as there is no clear progress towards a political union in Europe. Professor De Grauwe from the Catholic University of Leuven, advocated the creation of the common currency in the 1990s but his forthcoming research paper will present evidence of the euro's risks for the future, news agency AFP reports.

"A political union is the logical end-point of a currency union," Mr De Grauwe told Belgian weekly, The Business, adding "The monetary union will collapse ... not next year, but on a time frame of 10 or 20 years. There is not a single monetary union which survived without political union. They have all collapsed."

Economists point out that the common currency was established with the view to creating more jobs, higher growth and lower prices, but the current situation is far less optimistic. Growth is around two percent a year in the 12-member eurozone and high unemployment - above 8 percent - remains.

These problems relate to the poor record of individual member states in pursuing reforms to improve economic performance, but the EU has little powers to sanction them for failing to do so.

"If political union fails to materialise, then in the long term the euro area cannot continue to exist," argues Mr De Grauwe. The Belgian economist is not the only expert to raise the issue. The same point was made at last week's hearing of a new member of the European Central Bank's board, German Bundesbank's vice president Jurgen Stark.

"The EU currently is in a critical phase," Mr Stark told MEPs on Tuesday (15 April), adding "I am concerned about these trends because monetary union ... needs a common political foundation and a political commitment to function smoothly."

