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RUSSIA TO MOVE ROCKETS TO EU BORDER IF POLAND HOSTS US MISSILE SHIELD

August 7, 2008 The London Daily Telegraph reported: "Russia threatened to deploy bombers and short-range missiles on the Polish border if Warsaw agrees to host elements of a US missile defence shield on its territory. The warning marks a further escalation in the diplomatic crisis between Russia and the United States. Russian military hardware has not been stationed on the border of what is now the European Union since the Cold War.

Russia's ambassador to Minsk, Alexander Surikov, said that bombers and short-range quasiballistic missiles would be stationed in the west of Belarus, Moscow's most important ex-Soviet ally, once Poland and the United States agree terms.

"When Poland signs the agreement with the American side about hosting elements of the missile defence system, then we can discuss some additional aspects of military-technical cooperation with Belarus," he said. "We could be talking about the possible basing of Iskander missiles." There was some relief that the ambassador ruled out stationing nuclear missiles in the country.

Even so, the ambassador's threat was a further signal that hopes for a diplomatic settlement to the crisis were fading. The missile defence system, which the United States insists is necessary to protect Europe from a nuclear strike by Iran, has taken on increasing momentum after the Czech Republic agreed to host the shield's radar component.

Despite public opposition and internal divisions, Poland now appears close to allowing the United States to station 10 interceptor missiles on its territory."..."



GERMANY: A HOTBED OF HIZBULLAH ACTIVITY

August 7, 2008 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Khaled Kashkush is not the first Hizbullah spy to be recruited and trained in Germany. In 1997 the Lebanese Shi'ite movement recruited Stefan Smyrek, a German who converted to Islam, to carry out a suicide attack in Tel Aviv or Haifa. Smyrek, whose father was a British soldier stationed in Germany, was arrested at Ben-Gurion Airport and released as part of a prisoner swap in 2004.

Alexander Ritzmann, a Hizbullah expert and senior fellow at the European Foundation for Democracy, told *The Jerusalem Post* on Wednesday that mosques and Iranian cultural centers in such cities as Hamburg, Berlin and Münster were hotbeds of Hizbullah activity.

The terrorist organization has not been outlawed in Germany, and its approximately 900 supporters are permitted to raise funds and call for the destruction of Israel. The number of Hizbullah members in Germany has grown from 800 in 2006 to 900 in 2007, according to German intelligence reports.

The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution - Germany's domestic intelligence agency - identified Hizbullah as a threat to the country's democracy in its annual report for 2007.

Yet there was "a political decision of the German government to not act against Hizbullah," Ritzmann said."..."

ISRAEL MULLS MILITARY OPTION FOR IRAN NUKES

August 6, 2008 The Associated Press reported: "Israel is building up its strike capabilities amid growing anxiety over Iran's nuclear ambitions and appears confident that a military attack would cripple Tehran's atomic program, even if it can't destroy it. Such talk could be more threat than reality. However, Iran's refusal to accept Western conditions is worrying Israel as is the perception that Washington now prefers diplomacy over confrontation with Tehran.

The Jewish state has purchased 90 F-16I fighter planes that can carry enough fuel to reach Iran, and will receive 11 more by the end of next year. It has bought two new Dolphin submarines from Germany reportedly capable of firing nuclear-armed warheads — in addition to the three it already has.

And this summer it carried out air maneuvers in the Mediterranean that touched off an international debate over whether they were a "dress rehearsal" for an imminent attack, a stern warning to Iran or a just a way to get allies to step up the pressure on Tehran to stop building nukes.

According to foreign media reports, Israeli intelligence is active inside Iranian territory. Israel's military censor, who can impose a range of legal sanctions against journalists operating in the country, does not permit publication of details of such information in news reports written from Israel.

The issue of Iran's nuclear program took on new urgency this week after U.S. officials rejected Tehran's response to an incentives package aimed at getting it to stop sensitive nuclear activity — setting the stage for a fourth round of international sanctions against the country.

Israel, itself an undeclared nuclear power, sees an atomic bomb in Iranian hands as a direct threat to its existence."..."

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY COMPARES GAY RELATIONSHIPS TO MARRIAGE

August 6, 2008 The London Daily Telegraph reported: "In private correspondence, seen by the Daily Telegraph, Dr Rowan Williams, refutes the Anglican Communion's traditional teaching that homosexuality is sinful. Furthermore, he expresses his hope that the Church will change its position to be more accepting of gay partnerships.

His comments – made in a letter written shortly before he became Archbishop of Canterbury – will infuriate the conservatives who boycotted the recent Lambeth Conference in protest at the presence of liberals who elected Anglicanism's first openly gay bishop.

Leading evangelicals have claimed that he is in an "untenable position".

"The Bible does not address the matter of appropriate behaviour for those who are, for whatever reason, homosexual by instinct or nature," Dr Williams writes.

"By the end of the 80s I had definitely come to the conclusion that scripture was not dealing with the predicament of persons whom we should recognise as homosexual by nature.

"I concluded that an active sexual relationship between two people of the same sex might therefore reflect the love of God in a way comparable to marriage, if and only if it had the about it the same character of absolute covenanted faithfulness."

Although Dr Williams was known to have liberal views on the issue of homosexuality when he was appointed as archbishop in 2002, since moving to Canterbury he has tried to hold a traditional line for the sake of unity in the Church.

However, he makes clear in the letter that he believes that the Church could relax its strict teaching with time."..."

VENEZUELAN PROTEST CHAVEZ'S NEW SOCIALIST PUSH

August 6, 2008 MyWay.com reported: "Riot police used tear gas Wednesday to block hundreds of Venezuelans protesting the latest moves by President Hugo Chavez to concentrate his power. The demonstrators said a blacklist of opposition candidates and a series of socialist decrees are destroying what's left of their democracy.

Though the protest of about 1,000 people chanting "freedom!" was small compared to past marches, there is a growing public outcry over the sidelining of key government opponents ahead of state and local elections in November. Chavez opponents also are outraged by 26 laws the president just decreed, some of them mirroring the socialist measures voters rejected in a December referendum.

"We said in the referendum that we didn't want that, and now he's put it in the decrees," said protester Josefina Bravo, a 59-year-old who wore a sticker reading "No means no" on her baseball cap. "That's the problem we have: All the powers are concentrated in the president."

Chavez issued the decrees just before the expiration of special legislative powers that allowed him to make laws without National Assembly approval for the past 18 months.

For a time after the defeat of his constitutional referendum in December that would have imposed radical economic changes and let him run for re-election indefinitely, Chavez seemed to be taking a more pragmatic, less confrontational approach to his socialist project.

Now the leftist leader is pushing hard again to remake Venezuelan society. One decree establishes a civilian militia that critics warn could emulate the citizen groups that control many aspects of community life in Cuba. Another gives Chavez the ability to designate regional authorities who critics say could undermine the power of locally elected officials.

Other decrees empower Chavez to expropriate goods from private businesses and increase state control over food, punishing business owners who fail to comply with price controls with fines, closure and even 10-year prison terms."..."

ITALIAN TROOPS HIT THE STREETS TO COMBAT CRIME

August 5, 2008 The EU Observer reported: "Italy's centre-right government of Silvio Berlusconi has sent troops to the country's major cities as part of a campaign to combat crime and boost security. Some 3,000 soldiers are being deployed on the streets in Rome, Milan, Naples, Bologna, Verona and Palermo this week in an operation kicked off on Monday (4 August). The move was approved rules by Italy's parliament with troops expected to be kept in place for nine months.



The military is due to patrol some of the most frequented public places to prevent street crime which has been largely blamed on illegal immigrants. Some soldiers are to be located close to immigration centres. But the mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno, has decided to keep the troops away from the main tourist attractions in the centre of Italy's capital, such as the Colosseum or Trevi Fountain.

The government maintains the soldiers will assist police officers who will in turn have more time and personnel to investigate suspicious persons and locations.

"This is not a militarisation of cities but a clear response to the perceived demand for greater security," Defence Minister Ignazio La Russa said last week, according to the BBC. He added that the cabinet would review the operation after six months to see whether it has worked and whether it should be extended to other cities."..."