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IRANIAN SPIRITUAL LEADER: NUKES ARE A RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION

March 2, 2010 Israel National News reported: "Israel National News reports: "Ayatollah Masbah Yazdi, the spiritual teacher of Iran's dictator Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, says that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is a religious obligation. So reports the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (ITIC), headquartered in Ramat HaSharon.

Yazdi, considered one of the leading religious thinkers in Iran, authored a book in which he wrote that attaining the ability to independently produce 'special combat means of a specific type' is not only a military obligation for Iran, but also a religious one.

Just ten days ago, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the opposite...

Yazdi wrote that the country's leaders need not fear the financial costs of producing atomic weapons, as these would be more than compensated for by the 'Divine and Messianic aid' that would result.

ITIC acknowledges that the prevalent approach in official Iran is as Khamenei said, namely, that Islam forbids the development of nuclear weapons. However, no official ruling to this effect is known, nor 'is it reasonable to assume that this would prevent the regime from developing' such weapons, ITIC says.

'We must manufacture, here at home, the most advanced weapons,' Yazdi wrote, 'even if it doesn't please our enemies. There is no reason that they should have the right to manufacture [such] weapons, while other countries are denied this right.'

"We must not break in the face of temporary difficulties," Yazdi further writes, "and the Muslims must be patient and not be deterred by a material and economic lack - for if so, this is liable to lead to a separation from the religion."



China

NATO FUTURE IN QUESTION AS AFGHANISTAN ROLE DWINDLES

March 02, 2010 Time.com reported: "Washington struggled to persuade the European members of NATO to pull their military weight even in the years when the alliance's purpose was to protect them from a Soviet invasion. Now that NATO is fighting a real war against assorted insurgents far from home in Afghanistan, getting the Europeans to pony up resources is proving to be an even tougher sell - and threatening NATO's very survival.

Even as NATO nations have won plaudits for sending more troops to Afghanistan, cracks are beginning to show in the alliance's commitment and long-term health. "Right now, the alliance faces very serious, long-term, systemic problems," Defense Secretary Robert Gates said last week. Budget shortfalls - only five of the 28 members are meeting the alliance's goal of spending 2% of their GDP on defense - are hurting the war effort. The resulting dearth of helicopters, cargo planes and spy aircraft is "directly impacting operations in Afghanistan," Gates said.

Backsliding by the Netherlands, an inability to cough up sufficient troops to train the Afghan army and European polls showing dwindling support for the war paint a bleak picture. "The demilitarization of Europe - where large swaths of the general public and political class are averse to military force and the risks that go with it - has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace in the 21st," Gates warned.

The Dutch government is expected to pull its 1,600 troops out of Afghanistan soon. And a call for 3,200 additional NATO soldiers to help train the fledgling Afghan army was answered with commitments for only half that number...

While the U.S., Britain, Canada, Denmark, Estonia and the Netherlands have done the most fighting and dying on a per capita basis, others such as France and Germany have used caveats for what their forces can do to maximize their safety."..."

US BACKS OFF SPEEDY IRAN SANCTIONS PROMISED ISRAEL

March 02, 2010 DEBKAFfile reported: "Washington eased the threat of harsh sanctions hanging over Iran's head over its nuclear program at the very moment that it was beginning to take effect and Tehran was showing signs of stress.

Tuesday March 2, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told reporters on her plane to Buenos Aires: "We are moving expeditiously and thoroughly in the Security Council, I can't give you an exact date, but I would assume some time in the next several months."

This abrupt reversal of US tactics on Iran's nuclear activities took place when Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak was hardly out the door from Washington after receiving assurances from administration officials that a new round of tough sanctions would be in place by the end of March, with or without the Security Council. Clinton herself assured a Senate panel last week that stiff sanctions would be clamped down on Iran "in the next 30 to 60 days."

Clinton and defense secretary Robert Gates, when they talked to Barak last Thursday, Feb. 25, were so sure of that timeline that they fixed a date for the defense minister to return got Washington for the second time in a month after sanctions were in place.

DEBKAFFILE'S Iranian sources add that the Islamic Republic's leaders were also convinced last week that the US and likeminded European governments had finally made up their minds to new sanctions in the space of a month.

They read the reports leaked to the US media by administration sources about plans to freeze Iran's external banking connections and cripple

Revolutionary Guards businesses, and heard that the White House and a number of staunch European Union governments was ready to go ahead and sidestep the slow-moving, hamstrung Security Council.

Tehran's anxiety brought Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad running to Damascus on Feb. 25 to pull his alliance together...

Iran's war preparations hinged on the assignment of operational tasks to its allies and proxies, including the leaders of eleven Palestinian terrorist organizations based in Syria and Lebanon, who were summoned to Tehran Saturday, Feb. 27. They were given their instructions and treated to the most vicious anti-Israel, anti-Semitic invective from Ahmadinejad heard anywhere since World War II."...

CHILE EARTHQUAKE MAY HAVE SHORTENED DAYS ON EARTH

March 02, 2010 Space.com reported: "The massive 8.8 earthquake that struck Chile may have changed the entire Earth's rotation and shortened the length of days on our planet, a NASA scientist said Monday.

The quake, the seventh strongest earthquake in recorded history, hit Chile Saturday and should have shortened the length of an Earth day by 1.26 microseconds, according to research scientist Richard Gross at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif. One microsecond is one-millionth of a second long.

"This change should be permanent," Gross told SPACE.com today. There is a chance the Earth's rotation could relax over time...

The computer model used by Gross and his colleagues to determine the effects of the Chile earthquake effect also found that it should have moved Earth's figure axis by about 3 inches (8 cm or 27 milliarcseconds).

"Perhaps more impressive is how much the quake shifted Earth's axis," NASA officials said in a Monday update. The Earth's figure axis is not the same as its north-south axis, which it spins around once every day at a speed of about 1,000 mph (1,604 kph). The figure axis is the axis around which the Earth's mass is balanced. It is offset from the Earth's north-south axis by about 33 feet (10 meters)."..."

IRAN MAKING NEW SMART BOMBS

March 3, 2010 SpaceNews.com: "With defense and acrimony building in the Persian Gulf, Iran announced plans to test a new laser-guided bomb. Iran's Fars News Agency reported that a prototype of the 2,000-pound smart bomb would be tested "in the near future," the country's air force commander Brig. Gen Hassan Shahsafi said.

He said the smart bomb, dubbed Qassed-2, had a longer range and better vision than its earlier version, the Qassed-1. That weapon made its debut four years ago and has since then been in mass production. Qassed is interpreted as "messenger."

It was not immediately clear how advanced the prototype is and whether it would be available for mass production. Western military experts seemed skeptical of the announcement, saying the Islamic Republic had a history of declaring military advancements prematurely as a means of saber-rattling.

Others speculated that "the announcement of the Qassed-2 is a move of brinkmanship to discourage the Gulf emirate states of Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates from participating in the expansion of the United States' Patriot missile defense system," the Threat Matrix reported.

With Washington concerned about Iran's nuclear intentions, the United States opted last month to revamp its defensive stance in the Middle East and deter a possible attack from Iran by moving to deploy anti-missile shields in the Gulf region.

Experts said that even if the new smart bomb is superior to the Qassed-1, Tehran would need to overcome its problem of installing the new technology on reliable aircraft. That need may precipitate the procurement of fresh jets."..."



CHINA TO COOL RISING DEFENCE SPENDING

March 04, 2010 The Financial Times reported: "China has announced a sharp slowdown in the growth of its official defence budget, a move bolstering Beijing's argument that fears about the country being a military threat are overstated.

This year's draft defence budget, at Rmb532.1bn (\$), is 7.5 per cent higher than last year's budget report, according to the spokesman for the National People's Congress, China's legislature, on Thursday.

This is half the rate of spending growth cited in last year's budget report and the first time in well over a decade that the headline increase in defence spending has dropped below 10 per cent. The figures are likely to be interpreted as a political statement, as foreign defence officials and military experts have long contended that the official budget for the People's Liberation Army vastly understates real military expenditure.

Kenneth Lieberthal, of the Brookings Institution in Washington, said the opaque nature of Chinese defence spending made it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about military strategy from the announcement.

"But they may not mind sending a signal that their defence spending is not inexorably going up by double-digit amounts every year," he said. "They are always very sensitive to feeding perceptions that they are a threat to others."..."

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