



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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POWER SHIFTS PUSH MIDEAST CLOSER TO WAR

December 15, 2011 The National Post reports: "As Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad clings to power with the quiet backing of regional powers Iran and Russia, the Middle East may be sliding slowly into war.

Squeezed between the rebellions of a bloody Arab Spring and growing fears of a possible military response to Iran's growing nuclear threat, the region is becoming increasingly unstable.

'I would be very surprised if it turned into a Russian-American war, but this could be a Mid-East war: Hezbollah, Hamas, Iran, Syria, Israel all having at each other,' said Jack Granatstein, military historian and senior research fellow at the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute.

Ramazan Gözen, an international relations expert at Abant Izzet Baysal University wrote this week in the Turkish newspaper Zaman, 'A process of steadily sharpening polarization is being experienced ... [and] it does not bode well.... In short, the polarization over Syria and Iran can turn into an uncontrollable conflict between the polarized countries and their supporters.'

Russia and the United States are bracing for a naval confrontation, unprecedented since the Cold War, in the eastern Mediterranean, just off the coast of Syria.

Iran, worried over a possible pre-emptive strike against its nuclear facilities, has threatened to attack NATO's new missile defence shield in Turkey if it is attacked by either Israel or the United States. It has also said it will soon stage a navy drill to practise closing the Strait of Hormuz, through which 40% of the world's oil travels..."

EXPOSE: THE VATICAN WANTS TO LAY ITS HANDS ON JERUSALEM

December 15, 2011 Arutz Sheva reported: "Peace negotiations in the Middle East must tackle the issue of the status of the holy sites of Jerusalem", Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, head of the Vatican's Council for Interreligious Dialogue, declared several days ago in Rome.

The Vatican's former foreign minister asked to place some Israeli holy places under Vatican authority, alluding to the Cenacle on Mount Zion and the garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

The first site also houses what is referred to as King David's tomb.

"There will not be peace if the question of the holy sites is not adequately resolved", Tauran said. "The part of Jerusalem within the walls – with the holy sites of the three religions – is humanity's heritage. The sacred and unique character of the area must be safeguarded and it can only be done with a special, internationally-guaranteed statute".

The Israeli government and the Vatican are deadlocked in discussions over the status of the religious sites. Vatican officials are now reiterating their demand for control over the religious sites in the ancient and holy city founded by King David as the capital of ancient Israel and now the capital of the reestablished Jewish state.

Danny Ayalon, Israel's deputy foreign minister, declared that Israel might consider giving the Vatican "a greater role" in operating the sites."..."



IRAN MAY SOON LAUNCH NUCLEAR ACTIVITY IN UNDERGROUND FACILITY

December 14, 2011 Haaretz reported: "Iran could soon launch sensitive atomic activities in an underground facility deep inside a mountain, diplomatic sources said on Wednesday, a development likely to add to tension between Tehran and the West.

Iranian experts have carried out the necessary preparations at Fordow near the holy city of Qom, paving the way for the Islamic state to begin higher-grade uranium enrichment at the site on a former military base. The machines, equipment and nuclear material needed have been transferred and installed at Fordow, the sources added, suggesting the work itself -- until now conducted above ground at another location -- could start when Iran makes the decision.

It coincides with a period of escalating tension between Western powers and Iran after a U.N. nuclear watchdog report last month said Tehran appeared to have worked on designing a nuclear weapon, and that secret research may continue..."

IRAN TO EXPLOIT POWER VACUUM AS US QUITS IRAQ: ANALYSTS

December 14, 2011 Breitbart.com reported: "The US withdrawal from Iraq will leave a power vacuum in the Gulf, analysts say, paving the way for Iran to increase its influence in this economic and politically strategic region, a concern echoed by America's Gulf allies.

"The US withdrawal from Iraq will no doubt create a power vacuum," said Abdulaziz Sager, chairman of the Gulf Research Centre, noting that the US presence in the region empowered Gulf Arab countries with "whom they share interests and are bound by security agreements."

"This (US) presence gave them (Gulf countries) a sense of stability and security due to America's military capabilities," said Sager, adding that the troop withdrawal will "strengthen Iran's military and intelligence influence," in Iraq.

After nine years in Iraq, the US will withdraw its last remaining troops by the end of 2011, a year that so far has seen unprecedented uprisings

in the Arab world that have unseated three entrenched dictators in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, but also fuelled the sectarian and religious divide in the region.

Gulf Arab countries are primarily concerned about what Iran might do in what is today a Shiite-led Iraq, as well as their intentions in the broader region, including Saudi Arabia and Bahrain where Sunni regimes have harshly quelled Shiite dissent in recent months.

According to Sager, Iran's increased clout may not pose a "direct threat to Iraq" but will rather be used by the Shiite nation to challenge its rivals in the primarily Sunni Gulf, and to compensate for the potential loss of its ally Syria which is experiencing a mass uprising.

Iraq shares a religious link with Iran, and both nations have expressed similar critical views of the mounting regional and international pressure on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to resign.

"On the political front, the US exit will likely push Iraq to seek closer relations with Iran, particularly given the complete absence of Saudi and Turkish influence in the country," Sager said."..."

CHRISTIANS, JEWS BANNED FROM TEMPLE MOUNT IN JERUSALEM

December 12, 2011 WorldNetDaily.com reported: "The Israeli government is currently banning all non-Muslims from ascending the Temple Mount, considered the holiest site in Judaism.

"It seems freedom of religion in Israel is only for Muslims and not for Christians and Jews," Danny Danon, deputy speaker of the Knesset, told WND, referring to the new restrictions. Jerusalem Police spokesman Shmulik Ben Ruby confirmed to WND that Jews and Christians are restricted from entering the Temple Mount due to safety concerns over the main access gate for non-Muslims, known as the Mughrabi Bridge.

Yesterday, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat officially ordered the bridge to be indefinitely closed due to petitions from the city's Antiquities Authority citing fears the weakened wooden structure may collapse or catch fire. There are 15 gates leading into the Temple Mount compound, 10 of which are in use, but for Muslims only.

The Mughrabi Gate, located at the Western Wall plaza, is the only access for non-Muslims to enter the site, meaning its closure now prevents Jews, Christians and any tourists from visiting until a replacement structure is built. Ben Ruby said there are no immediate plans for any of the 10 entrances to the Mount to be opened for non-Muslims, citing security concerns."..."

IRAN MUST CHOSE BETWEEN A BOMB OR SURVIVAL: ISRAEL

December 12, 2011 SpaceWar.com reported: "A senior Israeli cabinet minister on Monday said Iran must be forced to face an existential question over its nuclear drive: choose between getting an atomic bomb, or survival.

"We believe that in order to stop the Iranian military nuclear project, the regime in Tehran should face a dilemma -- whether to have a bomb or to survive," Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Yaalon told reporters in Jerusalem. Yaalon said however it was for the international community, rather than Israel, to apply what he called an "achievable" policy.

"We prefer that the international community led by the United States will bring about this dilemma in order to convince the regime to give up its military nuclear programme," he said, stressing the need for political isolation and economic sanctions aimed at the banking and oil sectors.

Israel and much of the international community fear that Iran's nuclear programme masks a drive for a weapons capability. Tehran denies any such ambition and says the programme is for peaceful civilian energy and medical purposes only.

"Our policy is very clear -- by one way or another, the military nuclear project in Iran should be stopped," Yaalon said, indicating it "might be 12 months, might be 24 months" until Iran was able to reach a military nuclear capability.

Israel has pushed Washington and the European Union for tough sanctions against Tehran, but has repeatedly warned it would not allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons.

Yaalon, a member of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's inner circle of eight ministers, also reiterated the line that while a military option was still on the table, as "the last resort."

He declined to comment on what was behind a deadly explosion at a Iranian military base near Tehran last month, which a top Israeli intelligence official reportedly said was a site where ground-to-ground missiles were being developed.

"They had some blow to the missiles project in the last incident in which a missile site absorbed a significant blow -- especially regarding long-range missiles," Yaalon said.

Media reports have suggested the blast was part of a covert effort by the United States, Israel and other states to disable Iran's nuclear and missile programmes."..."



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