



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

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IRAN WARNS REGION AGAINST 'DANGEROUS' STANCE ON STRAIT OF HORMUZ

January 19, 2012 Haaretz reported: "Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said on Thursday that Tehran had never tried to block the Strait of Hormuz but warned its neighbors against putting themselves in a 'dangerous position.'

'We want peace and tranquility in the region, but some of the countries in our region, they want to direct other countries 12,000 miles away from this region. I repeat that Iran has never tried to hinder this important route,' Salehi, in Turkey on a visit, told Turkey's NTV broadcaster.

'I am calling to all countries in the region, please don't let yourselves be dragged into a dangerous position.'

Salehi added the United States should express it is open for negotiations with Tehran without conditions, referring to a letter Iran says it has received from the U.S. government about the Strait of Hormuz situation.

On Wednesday, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said that the U.S. military is fully prepared to deal with any threats by Iran to close the Strait of Hormuz, adding that no "special steps" were being taken at this point to bolster American forces in the region."..."

TWO US AIRCRAFT CARRIERS OPPOSITE IRAN, 15,000 TROOPS IN KUWAIT

January 13, 2012 Debkafile.com reported: "US President Barack Obama is busy aligning Middle East allies with the next US steps on Iran. Contributing to the mounting sense in Washington of an approaching US-Iranian confrontation, the Pentagon is substantially building up its combat power around Iran, stationing nearly 15,000 troops in Kuwait - two Army infantry brigades and a helicopter unit - and keeping two aircraft carriers in the region.

Iran's Ali Larijani told Turkish leaders in Ankara that his country is prepared to take on any attacks and may go public on a nuclear weapon."..."

RUSSIAN, FRENCH WARSHIPS OFF SYRIA, IRAN, US DRONES OVER IRANIAN COAST

January 9, 2012 Debkafile.com reported: "US, Russian, French and British air and naval forces are gathering around the Syrian and Iranian coasts on guard for fresh developments at the two Middle East flashpoints. The Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov put in earlier than planned at Syria's Tartus port Sunday, Jan. 8, together with two more Russian warships. British and French naval craft head to the Persian Gulf, while the giant US RQ-4 Global Hawk drone has begun monitoring Iranian coastlines from the USS Stenning aircraft carrier."..."

RUSSIA SAYS WESTERN STRIKE ON IRAN WOULD BE 'CATASTROPHE'

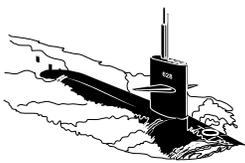
January 18, 2012 Haaretz reported: "A Western military strike on Iran would be a 'catastrophe' that would aggravate dangerous divisions already present in the Muslim world, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday.

When asked at an annual news conference whether the United States and its allies would be a military strike on Iran, Lavrov said, 'On the chances of whether this catastrophe will happen or not you should ask those who repeatedly talk about this.'

'I have no doubt that it would pour fuel on a fire which is already smouldering, the hidden smouldering fire of Sunni-Shi'ite confrontation, and beyond that (it would cause) a chain reaction -- I don't know where it would stop,' he said..."

IRANIAN SUBMARINES' AMBUSH FOR US AIRCRAFT CARRIERS IN PERSIAN GULF

January 18, 2012 The Fars News Agency reported: "A senior Iranian military commander underlined that the Iranian Navy's subsurface vessels enjoy a high capability to confront enemies' threats, and stated that Iran's submarines are able to ambush and hit enemy vessels specially US Aircraft carriers from the seabed throughout the Persian Gulf.



Speaking to FNA on Wednesday, Lieutenant Commander of the Iranian Army's Self-Sufficiency Jihad Rear Admiral Farhad Amiri said that Iran has the best electronic diesel submarines of the world, adding that enemies, the US in particular, are most focused on Iran's astonishing subsurface capabilities.



Amiri underlined that significance of submarines are not just indebted to their arms and equipment, 'rather the tactical issues are very important', given the geographical specifications of the waters surrounding the county.

'For example,' he stated, 'if an ordinary submarine can sit in the Persian Gulf's bed it would be the worst threat to the enemy.'

'That is one of the US concerns since Iranian submarines are noiseless and can easily evade detection as they are equipped with the sonar-evading technology' and can fire missiles and torpedoes simultaneously,' he added..."

BOOK CLAIMS KIM'S ELDEST FEARS NKOREA MAY COLLAPSE

January 17, 2012 The Associated Press reported: " new book claims that the eldest son of North Korea's late leader Kim Jong Il believes the impoverished regime is in danger of collapse and that his young half-brother, chosen to lead after Kim's death, is merely a figurehead.

The book by Tokyo-based journalist Yoji Gomi went on sale Wednesday. He says it is based primarily on email exchanges he had with Kim

Jong Nam over many years. The book, titled "My Father, Kim Jong Il and Me," drew immediate attention as a rare view into the family that has led the secretive country for decades _ though Kim Jong Nam is thought to be estranged from his family and the workings of government. Since Kim Jong Il's death Dec. 17, North Korea has been led by his youngest son, Kim Jong Un.

"Jong Un will just be a figurehead," the book quotes Kim Jong Nam as saying. It claims he said the collapse of North Korea's economy is likely unless it initiates reforms, which could also bring it down.

"Without reforms and liberalization, the collapse of the economy is within sight," he quoted Kim as saying. "But reforms and opening up could also invite dangers for the regime."

Gomi, a Tokyo Shimbun journalist who had assignments in Seoul and Beijing, claims he exchanged 150 emails and has spent a total of seven hours interviewing Kim Jong Nam, who was seen as a possible successor until he fell out of favor with Kim Jong Il in 2001...

Not long after Kim Jong Il's funeral, Jong Nam suggested in an interview with a Japanese TV network that he opposes a hereditary transfer of power to his young half-brother, who is believed to be in his late 20s.

That was a rare public sign of discord in the tightly choreographed succession process, but analysts said Jong Nam spends so much time outside his native land that his opinion carries little weight."..."

BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF ASIA'S SEAS GOES UNDERWATER

January 18, 2012 The Associated Press reported: "It's getting a bit more crowded under the sea in Asia, where Andrew Peterson commands one of the world's mightiest weapons: a \$2 billion nuclear submarine with unrivaled stealth and missiles that can devastate targets hundreds of miles (kilometers) away.

Super high-tech submarines like Cmdr. Peterson's USS Oklahoma City have long been the envy of navies all over the globe – and a key component of U.S. military strategy.

"We really have no peer," Peterson told The Associated Press during a recent port call in Japan.

But America's submarine dominance in the Pacific is facing its biggest challenge since the Cold War. Nearly every Asian country with a coastline is fortifying its submarine fleet amid territorial disputes stirred up by an increasingly assertive China and the promise of bountiful natural resources.

Submarines are difficult to find and hard to destroy. Even fairly crude submarine forces can attack surface ships or other targets with a great deal of stealth, making them perfect for countries with limited resources. The threat of such an attack is a powerful deterrent in Asia, where coastal defenses are vital.

"This is shaping up as an intense arms race," said Lyle Goldstein, an associate professor at the China Maritime Studies Institute of the U.S. Naval War College. "This arms race is not simply China versus the rest – though that explains much of it – because there are other rivalries here as well."

China is pouring money into enlarging and modernizing its fleet, and India is planning to get a nuclear-powered attack submarine – the INS Chakra – on a 10-year lease from Russia as early as this month.

Australia is debating its most-expensive defense project ever – a submarine upgrade that could cost more than 36 billion dollars.

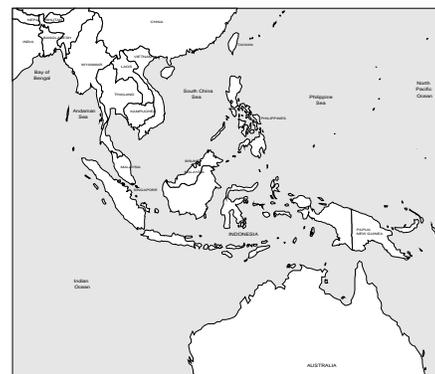
Japan is adding another eight to its 16-boat fleet. South Korea is selling them to Indonesia. Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan and even Bangladesh either now have, or are planning to acquire subs.

North Korea, which has a large fleet of mini-subs, allegedly put them to deadly use in 2010 – killing 46 South Korean sailors in the worst clash since their war ended in 1953.

The trend has a momentum of its own – once one country gets submarines, its neighbors are under pressure to follow suit, lest they give up a strategic advantage. But the rush to build up submarine forces also underscores a growing awareness of the region's potential riches.

Roughly half of the goods transported between continents by ship go through the South China Sea, accounting for \$1.2 trillion in U.S. trade annually. The area has vast, largely untapped natural resources – including oil reserves of seven billion barrels and an estimated 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

"The geostrategic significance of the South China Sea is difficult to overstate," said a report this month by the Center for a New American Security, a private think tank based in Washington DC. "To the extent that the world economy has a geographical center, it is in the South China Sea."..."



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