



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 19 2013

FRANCE BATTLES MALI ISLAMISTS AS HOSTAGE CRISIS UNFOLDS

January 16, 2013 AFP reported: "French troops battled Islamist rebels in Mali Wednesday in a war that escalated as Al-Qaeda-linked fighters claimed to have taken 41 foreigners hostage in a retaliatory attack in neighbouring Algeria, with two reported dead. After days of airstrikes on Islamist positions in the northern territory the rebels seized in April, French and Malian ground forces battled the insurgents in the central towns of Diabaly and Konna, north of the capital, Bamako.

In a dramatic development over the border in Algeria, Islamists claimed to hold 41 foreign hostages, including seven Americans, after an attack on a gas field in the country's east. Algerian media reported the dawn attack on a gas field had left two foreigners -- including a Briton -- dead, and six injured.

"Forty-one westerners including seven Americans, French, British and Japanese citizens have been taken hostage," a spokesman for the Islamists told the Mauritanian News Agency and Sahara Media.

One of the militants earlier told AFP the kidnapers belonged to a group run by former Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar.

"We are members of Al-Qaeda and we came from northern Mali," he told AFP by telephone in claiming responsibility for the attack.

French President Francois Hollande said the kidnapping of the French nationals had not been confirmed. The extremists demanded the release of 100 Islamists held in Algeria in exchange for their hostages, a worker at the site told AFP."..."

CAMERON: REFERENDUM ON EU OPT-OUTS, NOT MEMBERSHIP

January 17, 2013 The EUobserver reported: "British leader David Cameron has given a foretaste of his big speech in Amsterdam on Friday (18 January) by saying he does not support an in/out referendum, but wants to renegotiate EU-UK relations. Speaking during his regular question time in the House of Commons on Wednesday, he said: "I do not think it would be right for Britain to have an in/out referendum today, because we would be giving the British people a false choice."

But he added: "Throughout Europe, countries are looking at forthcoming treaty change and thinking: 'What can I do to maximise my national interest?' That is what the Germans will do. That is what the Spanish will do. That is what the British should do."

He indicated he will call for a referendum on EU relations, but that the question will be limited to whether British citizens support his plans for a UK opt-out on certain EU laws.

"Is it not in Britain's national interest to argue for changes which ... will strengthen and sort out the relationship between Britain and the European Union, and then to ask the British people for their consent?" he noted."..."



U.S. OFFICIAL WARNS NORTH KOREA AGAINST NUCLEAR TEST

January 17, 2013 SpaceDaily.com reports: "The top US diplomat for East Asian affairs warned North Korea on Wednesday against any 'provocative' act, as concerns grow that Pyongyang might be preparing a nuclear test.

'We are very clear in our position that provocative steps are to be discouraged,' Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell told reporters in Seoul when asked about the nuclear test speculation.

Campbell was in Seoul to meet with top officials, including president-elect Park Geun-Hye.

The impoverished but nuclear-armed North successfully staged a long-range rocket launch in December, sparking global security concerns and drawing UN condemnation and calls from the US and its allies for tougher sanctions.

Pyongyang said the launch was a purely scientific mission aimed at placing a polar-orbiting earth observation satellite in space.

Most of the world saw it as a disguised ballistic missile test that violated UN resolutions imposed after the North's nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009. Both of those tests came after long-range missile launches..."

EGYPTIAN COURT SENTENCES CHRISTIAN FAMILY TO 15 YEARS FOR CONVERTING FROM ISLAM

January 17, 2013 Fox News reported: "The 15-year prison sentence given to a woman and her seven children by an Egyptian court for converting to Christianity is a sign of things to come, according to alarmed human rights advocates who say the nation's Islamist government is bad news for Christians in the North African country.

A criminal court in the central Egyptian city of Beni Suef meted out the shocking sentence last week, according to the Arabic-language Egyptian paper Al-Masry Al-Youm. Nadia Mohamed Ali, who was raised a Christian, converted to Islam when she married Mohamed Abdel-Wahhab Mustafa, a Muslim, 23 years ago.

He later died, and his widow planned to convert her family back to Christianity in order to obtain an inheritance from her family. She sought the help of others in the registration office to process new identity cards between 2004 and 2006. When the conversion came to

light under the new regime, Nadia, her children and even the clerks who processed the identity cards were all sentenced to prison.”...”

Samuel Tadros, a research fellow at Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom, said conversions like Nadia's have been common in the past, but said Egypt's new Sharia-based constitution ‘is a real disaster in terms of religion freedom.’...”

PROSOR: TIME TO TAKE ACTION ON SYRIA'S CHEMICAL WEAPONS

January 16, 2013 Arutz Sheva reported: “It is time for the United Nations Security Council to act, and not just talk, over the threat of Syrian chemical weapons, Israel's UN ambassador said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a special meeting of the UN Security Council on terrorism, ambassador Ron Prosor said that he was concerned about the possibility that Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons may fall into the hands of the Hizbullah terror group.

‘The Security Council must act today, not tomorrow,’ he said. ‘It is our responsibility to prevent leakage of chemical weapons to terrorist groups. Too many decisions were made in this room but not implemented, so the Security Council must not be satisfied with words. There are times when lack of action is not an option.’

Syria's chemical weapons stockpile, which dates back to the 1970s, is the biggest in the Middle East, but its precise scope remains unclear, according to analysts. The country has hundreds of tons of various chemical agents, including sarin and VX nerve agents, as well as older blistering agents such as mustard gas, dispersed in dozens of manufacturing and storage sites, experts say.

U.S. officials recently said there was evidence that Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's troops had not only moved deadly sarin gas that might be used against rebels, but also that its binary components, usually stored separately, had been combined and placed into bombs for use.”...”

'OBAMA: ISRAEL DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR IT'

January 15, 2013 Israel National News reported: “The Atlantic's Jeffrey Goldberg, writing in Bloomberg View, has revealed that U.S. President Barack Obama said repeatedly recently that Israel does not know what its own best interests are.

When informed about the Israeli decision to approve construction plans in the E1 area, ‘Obama, who has a famously contentious relationship with the prime minister, didn’t even bother getting angry,’ wrote Goldberg. ‘He told several people that this sort of behavior on Netanyahu’s part is what he has come to expect, and he suggested that he has become inured to what he sees as self-defeating policies of his Israeli counterpart.

‘In the weeks after the UN vote, Obama said privately and repeatedly, ‘Israel doesn’t know what its own best interests are.’ With each new settlement announcement, in Obama’s view, Netanyahu is moving his country down a path toward near-total isolation.’

According to Goldberg, Obama ‘has become convinced that Netanyahu is so captive to the settler lobby, and so uninterested in making anything more than the slightest conciliatory gesture toward Palestinian moderates, that an investment of presidential interest in the peace process wouldn’t be a wise use of his time.’

‘For Israel,’ Goldberg predicts, ‘the short-term consequences of Obama’s frustration are limited. The U.S. won’t cut off its aid to Israel, and Obama’s effort to thwart Iran’s nuclear ambitions will continue whether or not he’s fed up with Netanyahu.

‘But it is in terms of American diplomatic protection – among the Europeans and especially at the UN – that Israel may one day soon notice a significant shift.’...”



IRAN COULD REACH KEY POINT FOR NUCLEAR BOMB BY 2014

January 15, 2013 Haaretz reported: “Iran could produce enough weapon-grade uranium for one or more nuclear bombs by mid-2014, and the United States and its allies should intensify sanctions on Tehran before that point is reached, a report by a group of U.S. nonproliferation experts said.

President Barack Obama should also clearly state that the United States will take military action to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, the report said.

The UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, has expressed concern that Iran's nuclear program has a military dimension. Tehran, which says its nuclear program is for peaceful energy purposes, calls those allegations baseless.”...”

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