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RUSSIA THREATENS TO USE 'NUCLEAR FORCE' OVER CRIMEA AND THE BALTIC STATES

April 2, 2015 independant.co.uk reported: "Russia has threatened to use "nuclear force" to defend its annexation of Crimea and warned that the "same conditions" that prompted it to take military action in Ukraine exist in the three Baltic states, all members of Nato. According to notes made by an American at a meeting between Russian generals and US officials – and seen by The Times newspaper - Moscow threatened a "spectrum of responses from nuclear to non-military" if Nato moved more forces into Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

The Russians told the meeting, which took place in Germany last month, that an attempt to return Crimea to Ukraine would be met "forcefully including through the use of nuclear force".

And they said if Nato sent arms to Ukraine this would be seen as "further encroachment by Nato to the Russian border" and "the Russian people would demand a forceful response".

They added that "the same conditions that existed in Ukraine and caused Russia to take action there" existed in the three Baltic states, which like Ukraine have significant numbers of people who regard themselves as ethnically Russian.

Russia was considering taking steps in the Baltics, according to the notes, but this would most likely be "destabilising actions that would be even harder to trace back to Russia than those of eastern Ukraine". The notes suggest Moscow would avoid "injections of troops and heavy weapons in favour of other tools".

"Russia would hope slowly to entice those Russian populations towards Russia without giving Nato a pretext to deploy troops," the document adds.

If Nato then responded, that would make it "a potential co-aggressor against Russian-speaking minorities in Baltic states", a situation described as "potentially more dangerous than that in Ukraine to the United States".



EVEN FULL DEAL WITH IRAN COULD FAIL TO STABILISE MIDEAST: ANALYSTS

April 2, 2015 spacedaily.com reported: "Negotiators hope a nuclear deal will bring Iran back into the diplomatic fold, but experts are divided on whether it will douse the many fires of the Middle East.

Iran and six world powers agreed Thursday on the outline of a potentially historic deal to curtail its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of economic sanctions on the Islamic republic.

Even while struggling under sanctions and in diplomatic isolation, Iran's influence has been on the rise and it is deeply involved across the region.

On top of its long-standing ties to the Syrian regime and Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, it has been leading the fight against the Islamic State group in Iraq and is the chief backer of the surging Huthi rebellion in Yemen.

When negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme began in 2013, there were hopes a deal could pave the way for greater cooperation on these security issues, but some analysts say the moment may have passed.

"Things have changed so much in the last few months, even weeks. The nuclear issue used to be the paramount issue in the region, but the security debate has moved on," said David Hartwell, managing director of Middle East Insider magazine based in London.

Some still hope the agreement will encourage Iran and its Middle Eastern rivals to sit down together.

"Up to now Iran intervenes without being asked in regional issues and that leads to war. An agreement means Iran must start playing a more diplomatic game," said Bernard Hourcade, of the National Centre for Scientific Research in Paris."

If sanctions are lifted, the big winners may be Russia and China. They have been involved in the nuclear negotiations, and do not face the sort of domestic opposition that will make it difficult for the United States to fully embrace Iran.

"Beijing and Moscow are taking steps to deepen their already considerable economic and strategic involvement in Iran," said Leverett, adding that both Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin were due to visit Tehran in the coming weeks."

IRAN MILITIA CHIEF: DESTROYING ISRAEL IS 'NONNEGOTIABLE'

April 1, 2015 The Times of Israel reported: "The commander of the Basij militia of Iran's Revolutionary Guards said that 'erasing Israel off the map' is 'nonnegotiable,' according to an Israel Radio report Tuesday. Militia chief Mohammad Reza Naqdi also threatened Saudi Arabia, saying that the offensive it is leading in Yemen 'will have a fate like the fate of Saddam Hussein.'

Naqdi's comments were made public as Iran and six world powers prepared Tuesday to issue a general statement agreeing to continue nuclear negotiations in a new phase aimed at reaching a comprehensive accord by the end of June.

In 2014, Naqdi said Iran was stepping up efforts to arm West Bank Palestinians for battle against Israel, adding the move would lead to Israel's annihilation, Iran's Fars news agency reported.

'Arming the West Bank has started and weapons will be supplied to the people of this region,' Naqdi said.

'The Zionists should know that the next war won't be confined to the present borders and the Mujahedeen will push them back,' he added. Naqdi claimed that much of Hamas's arsenal, training and technical knowhow in the summer conflict with Israel was supplied by Iran..."

MAHDI TO RETURN BY 2016, FOLLOWED BY JESUS?

March 31, 2015 WND.com reported: "It's not only evangelical Christians who are sensing that something has changed in the world, and that we may be entering the very last days. Muslims are also eagerly awaiting their messiah.

In the latest evidence of this messianic fervor, a mainstream Sunni Muslim website has decreed that the Islamic messiah, called the Mahdi, will appear this year or in 2016 and that the Muslim Jesus will return in 2022 to conquer the world for Islam.

DiscoveringIslam.org and the End Times Research Center have calculated that the 'first phase' of the end of time will begin soon and lead to the 'Day of Judgment' in seven years.

The estimates were derived from 'the latest research' into numerical analysis of the Quran, Hadith, Arabic words and historical events,' according to DiscoveringIslam.org.

'The Messenger of Allah [sallallahu 'alayhi wa-sallam] informed the Companions of everything that would occur until the Day of Resurrection,' the website reports..."

'NO MORE CHRISTIANS IN MIDEAST WITHIN 2 YEARS'

March 30, 2015 WND.com reported: "If the U.S. and international community do not intervene, Christians may be driven out of the Middle Eastern Arab countries within two years, warned Lebanese parliamentarian Samy Gemayel during a radio interview Sunday. Gemayel, a senior member of the Phalange Party, descends from a historic Lebanese Christian family.

His father, Amin, was the country's president, while his brother, Pierre, was a member of parliament and a government minister before his assassination Nov. 21, 2006. Samy Gemayel's uncle, former president-elect Bashir Gemayel, also was assassinated.

Speaking on 'Aaron Klein Investigative Radio,' broadcast on New York's AM 970 The Answer and Philadelphia's NewsTalk 990, Gemayel warned Christians and moderate Muslims are victims of two extremist forces fighting each other. He stated: "Today all the moderates in the region are taken between two big extremists powers. On one side you have ISIS and on the other side you have the Islamic state of Iran.

'So you have two Islamic states with two very extremist ideologies fighting against each other. And the moderates are stuck in a sandwich between these two powers.'..."

IRAN DEAL WORSE THAN ISRAEL FEARED, NETANYAHU SAYS

March 29, 2015 The Times of Israel reported: "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Sunday against the emerging nuclear deal with Iran, as Iranian and Western officials in Lausanne, Switzerland were rushing to reach a framework agreement by an end-of-month deadline.

'After the Beirut-Damascus-Baghdad axis, Iran is maneuvering from the south to take over the entire Middle East,' Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting, one of the last for his outgoing government. 'The Iran-Lausanne-Yemen axis is dangerous for mankind and must be stopped.'

Netanyahu told ministers that he had spoken with Republican leaders in the US Senate and 'conveyed our serious concern regarding the arrangement with Iran at the nuclear talks. This agreement confirms all our fears and exceeds them.

'While [world powers] convene to sign this deal, Iran's proxies in Yemen are conquering large swaths of land in an effort to overtake the Bab al-Mandab straits, so that they can change the balance of power in shipping oil,' he said, referring to recent unrest in Yemen.

Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon also called the emerging deal with Iran 'a very bad deal.' Turning Iran into a nuclear threshold state, he said Sunday, 'would be nothing less than a tragedy for the moderate regimes in the Middle East and the entire Western world.'..."



EGYPT'S SISSI: ARAB LEADERS AGREE TO JOINT MILITARY FORCE

March 29, 2015 Voice of America News reported: "Arab leaders have agreed to form a joint military force in the face of the 'challenges' facing the region, Egypt's president announced on the final day of a two-day Arab summit. President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi made the comment Sunday during the Arab League's closing session at the Egyptian resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh. 'The Arab leaders had decided to agree on the principle of a joint Arab military force,' he said.

Sissi said a high-level panel will work under the supervision of Arab chiefs of staff to work out the details. Egyptian officials said the proposed force would be made up of roughly 40,000 elite troops and backed by jets, warships and light armor.

Working out the make-up and structure of the force is expected to take months, but previous attempts to create a unified command in the divided Arab world have failed.

The decision was mostly aimed at fighting jihadists who have overrun swathes of Iraq and Syria and won a foothold in Libya, Arab League chief Nabil Elaraby said ahead of the summit..."