



PROPHETIC TIMES

January, 1998

Weekly Reader of World News

March 21, 2020

Coronavirus Fears Aside, Putin Pushes to Expand Power

March 19, 2020 voanews.com reported: "Russian President Vladimir Putin indicated a nationwide vote on constitutional amendments that would open the door to extending his power might face delays because of concerns about the coronavirus pandemic, which has affected Russia little but ravaged other parts of the globe.

'I really am counting on people to show up on April 22 and support the changes,' Putin said in a Wednesday speech that was meant to mark the sixth anniversary of Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula but touched on the vote set for next month.

'Although, if there will be problems connected to this well-known coronavirus, then the law allows us to calmly ... move it to a later period,' he said. 'If the epidemiological situation allows, we'll hold the national vote. If not, then we'll postpone a bit.'

At the heart of the issue: a controversial referendum over reforms that, among other measures, would allow the Russian leader to retain his post and compete in future presidential elections when his current term ends in 2024..."

China Threatens EMP Attack in South China Sea

March 18, 2020 breitbart.com reported: "Chinese state media on Tuesday rather unsubtly decided this would be a good time to chat with a panel of 'experts' about the possibility of using an electromagnetic pulse weapon (EMP) against American ships that enter portions of the South China Sea illegally claimed by Beijing.

The timing suggests it was a bit of saber-rattling by a Communist Party nervous about its power and prestige after the Wuhan virus disaster, but some degree of escalation in the South China Sea has long been a concern for the U.S. Navy and ships from across the free world.

To put it bluntly, an EMP strike on U.S. warships would involve detonating a small nuclear warhead above them, but China's state-run *Global Times* threw in some speculation about 'low-energy laser devices' to keep their saber from rattling too loudly..."

Regional nuclear war a risk for global food security

March 17, 2020 spacewar.com reported: "Even a limited nuclear war could have dangerous effects far beyond the region that is fatally hit. It would result in global cooling that substantially reduces agricultural production in the world's main breadbasket regions, from the US, to Europe, Russia, and China.

The particular effect on food security worldwide including trade responses has now for the first time been revealed by an international team of scientists in a study based on advanced computer simulations. The sudden temperature reduction would lead to a food system shock unprecedented in documented history. It would not undo long-term climate change from fossil fuels use, though – after about a decade of cooling, global warming would surge again.

'We now know that nuclear conflict would not just be a terrible tragedy in the region where it happens – it is also an underestimated risk for global food security,' says Jonas Jaegermeyr at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, and the University of Chicago; lead-author of the study now published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences..."

US warns Iraq it 'will not tolerate' attacks on Americans

March 17, 2020 spacewar.com reported: "Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned Iraq Monday the US would retaliate 'as necessary' against any new assaults on Americans after a slew of rocket attacks.

The United States last week launched airstrikes against an Iranian-allied paramilitary group following a deadly attack on an Iraqi base housing US troops — but rocket fire has continued unabated.

In a phone call with Iraq's caretaker prime minister, Adel Abdel Mahdi, Pompeo said that Baghdad 'must defend coalition personnel' who are officially deployed as part of the campaign against the Islamic State group.

'Secretary Pompeo noted that America will not tolerate attacks and threats to American lives and will take additional action as necessary in self-defense,' the State Department said in a statement..."

'D' word rears head as coronavirus-hit markets brace for recession

March 17, 2020 reuters.com reported: "The coronavirus shockwaves rippling through U.S. stocks are forcing investors to contemplate outcomes more dire than a recession, including several quarters of declining economic activity, a credit crisis or even a depression. The rising global toll from the pandemic and the uncertainty over how far it may spread has left investors and economists scrambling to gauge the financial fallout.

"This market looks like it has already priced in most of a garden variety recession," said Frances Donald, global chief economist at Manulife Investment Management. "It is now on top of that having to price in some probability of a credit crisis."



Forecasters at Goldman Sachs and other banks are now projecting a steep economic contraction in at least the second quarter as governments in the United States and Europe start shutting restaurants, closing schools and calling on citizens to stay home.

But there is hope among some economists that economy will start expanding again later this year — depending in part on efforts to contain the virus, known as Covid-19.

The S&P 500 on average has fallen 28% from peak to trough during recessions, according to an analysis of the past 70 years from Keith Lerner, chief market strategist at Truist/SunTrust Advisory Services. As of Monday's close, the benchmark index had declined 29.5% from its Feb. 19 closing record high. But the market's plunge was much deeper over a decade ago during the financial crisis, with the S&P 500 tumbling more than 50%.

"A 2008-like financial contagion is not yet priced into this market," Donald said, but she added the market "probably won't have any reassurance that we have avoided that 2008-type scenario completely until we see a calming of credit spreads and the pace of Covid-19 cases starts to decline." ..."

Coronavirus war of words erupts as superpowers blame each other for COVID-19 'bioweapon'

March 17, 2020 dailystar.co.uk reported: "While all of the earliest confirmed cases of COVID-19 were recorded in Wuhan in China, the Chinese government is now challenging the belief that the coronavirus started there. Zhao Lijian, a spokesman from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has raised a theory that the virus actually started in the USA, and was brought to China by US Army competitors in the Military World Games.



The 7th Military World Games were held in Wuhan City from 15 to 30 October 2019. It was the largest event of its type ever to be held in China, with nearly 10,000 athletes from over 100 countries competing in 27 sports.

The Pentagon sent 17 teams with more than 280 athletes and support staff to the games. There is no suggestion that any of them have tested positive for COVID-19.

Iran, where almost 15,000 people have contracted the virus and 853 have died, is also questioning the accepted origin of the disease. They're going even further than the Chinese — describing it as a deliberate attack. State propaganda channel PressTV is pushing the theory that COVID-19 is an American-made bioweapon. Iranian commentators have also said that or that Israeli scientists are using the epidemic as a smokescreen for a targeted attack on Iran.

Iran's PressTV quoted former CIA counter-terrorism specialist Philip Giraldi, who wrote: "Several reports suggest that there are components of the virus that are related to HIV that could not have occurred naturally."

Rachel Chernaskey, writing for the Foreign Policy Research Institute, said: "One narrative all three countries highlight is the notion that the United States is weaponising the crisis for political gain and thus worsening its spread globally." ..."

Plague of locusts set to descend upon Middle East in time for Passover

March 16, 2020 timesofisrael.com reported: "A plague of locusts the likes of which have been unseen for over 30 years is about to hit Africa and the Middle East. Adding to the perfect biblical storm, the current coronavirus pandemic is affecting travel of international experts and in-country gatherings for training to combat the locust threat, said Rome-based Senior Locust Forecasting Officer Keith Cressman on Monday.

Cressman works at Locust Watch, a division of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization, which gives emergency assistance to countries facing desert locust invasions and constantly monitors the status of potential infestations. According to the organization's most recent forecast report, there are new "extremely alarming" swarms forming in Horn of Africa.

Cressman, who has worked with the organization for over three decades, told The Times of Israel on Monday that the previous time the region has been in such danger was during the plague of 1987-1989.

The Desert Locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*) "is the most destructive migratory pest in the world," according to the Locust Watch website. As depicted in the Book of Exodus, when the highly mobile swarms of Desert Locust form, "they are ravenous eaters who consume their own weight per day, targeting food crops and forage." While one locust may not seem a major *fresser* (eater, Yiddish), the swarms can grow to millions of individuals, "with the capacity to consume the same amount of food in one day as 35,000 people." ..."

Experts: North Korea's Recent Launches Tested Missiles to Target South Korea

March 13, 2020 voanews.com reported: "In recent tests, North Korea has been improving the firepower of its missiles that can target South Korea, making them ready to deploy on a battlefield, experts said.

'North Korea has been enhancing its firepower, war-fighting capabilities over the past two years, flight-testing a number of new systems,' including the KN-25 missile and variants such as the KN-23 and KN-24, said Michael Elleman, director of the Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Policy Program at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Both systems 'are capable of threatening targets in South Korea and are likely more accurate and lethal than the systems previously seen in North Korea,' he said.

Compared with artillery positioned across the North Korean side of the demilitarized zone, Elleman said, the KN-25 missiles give Pyongyang the ability 'to attack the South relentlessly in the opening hours or days of conflict.' ..."

Compiled by L. Jim Tuck,

UCG Minister

[<ljt5053@sbcglobal.net>](mailto:ljt5053@sbcglobal.net)