



PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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HAMAS' PAST CASTS SHADOW OVER PEACE PLANS

January 26, 2006 CNN.com reported: "The future of the Middle East entered a new era of uncertainty Thursday, as the militant Palestinian opposition group Hamas snatched power from the ruling old guard and made skeptics of many key players in the peace process.

In conceding Fatah's defeat, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas urged Hamas to keep negotiations moving forward, but the U.S. seemed doubtful and Israel responded by demanding that the Palestinian Authority disarm the new ruling party "and the other terrorist organizations."

The imminent power shift represents a stark change in ideologies: Abbas has long been a conduit of the White House-backed road map to Middle East peace. Hamas, on the other hand, has called for the destruction of Israel and is considered a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department.

Hamas, however, has operated a network of successful social and charitable organizations for Palestinians, and Abbas did not appear to abandon hope that the peace process could move forward as long as the fundamentalist Islamic group can earn "the respect and confidence of the international community."...

It sounds like a tall order for a region that has been wracked with violence for decades, but Hamas leaders have already indicated that they are willing -- at the very least -- to honor a year-old cease-fire with Israel.

About 1,073,000 Palestinians voted, a turnout of 77 percent of registered voters, said Hana Naser of the Central Election Commission.

An exit poll Wednesday indicated Hamas would do well, likely blocking Abbas' Fatah from maintaining its majority in the 132-seat Palestinian Legislative Council. But Hamas' satisfaction transformed to glee over the next day as Naser announced Thursday that Hamas not only blocked a Fatah majority, but also won the majority itself, taking 76 seats in parliament."

IRAN REACHES INDIGENOUS NUKE CAPABILITY



January 25, 2006 The Middle East Newsline reported: "Iran might have already reached the point of no longer requiring foreign assistance to advance in its nuclear weapons program.

A leading Israeli defense figure asserted that Iran has already acquired the basis for nuclear weapons development and production. Yuval Steinitz, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, said Iran could produce and assemble nuclear weapons without foreign assistance.

"I think they have passed this stage already," Steinitz said in an interview with the independent Arutz-7 radio. "Iran is a large country, and just like the United States built a bomb without help in 1945, Iran can do the same in 2006."

Steinitz, who receives weekly briefings from the nation's intelligence services, disputed an assertion by Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz regarding Iran. Recently, Halutz told Steinitz's Knesset panel that Iran could reach "the point of no return" in its nuclear weapons program by March 2006..."

IRAN MOVES ASSETS OUT OF EUROPE

January 23, 2006 The Middle East Newsline reported: "Iran has begun removing assets from Europe. Western diplomatic sources said Iran has ordered the withdrawal of assets from major banks in Europe amid concern that they would be frozen as part of United Nations Security Council sanctions. The sources said the Teheran regime has transferred many of these assets to China.

"We are seeing movement of Iranian assets from several countries in Europe, particularly France," a diplomatic source said.

Iran has confirmed the removal of assets from Europe. No figures were released.

The diplomatic sources said the Iranian Supreme Council has ordered the Central Bank and several ministries to withdraw hard currency deposits from European banks. The sources said the only country in Europe where Iranian assets have been allowed to remain was Switzerland..."

S. KOREAN PRESIDENT WARNS OF 'FRICTION' WITH US OVER NORTH

January 25, 2006 Voice of America News reported: "South Korea's president has warned of "friction" with the United States if Washington continues to pursue forceful measures against North Korea. President Roh Moo-hyun made the comments a day after U.S. Treasury officials sought - but apparently failed to get - Seoul's support in punishing North Korea for alleged financial crimes.

President Roh said he opposes what he called "some forces" in the United States that favor putting pressure on North Korea to force the collapse of its communist regime. Mr. Roh says such action would result only in "friction and disagreement" between South Korea and the United States. But he emphasized that for now, Seoul and Washington are united in seeking a peaceful resolution of the dispute over North Korea's nuclear weapons programs.

A U.S. Embassy spokesman in Seoul also said Wednesday that talk of differences between Seoul and Washington over North Korea is "an exaggeration."

Diplomatic efforts to convince North Korea to voluntarily abandon its nuclear programs have been stalled since November. Pyongyang reiterated its demand that the U.S. lift sanctions imposed in September because of the North's alleged money-laundering and counterfeiting activities.

The North Koreans say they will continue to boycott six-nation nuclear disarmament talks while the sanctions are in place. Washington says the financial crimes issue is separate from the nuclear dispute.

South Korea, which follows a so-called "Sunshine Policy" of engagement and cooperation with the North, has at times differed with the more aggressive policies of the Bush Administration..."

BUSH WARNS IRAN ON ISRAEL

January 24, 2006 SpaceWar.com reported: "US President George W. Bush said Monday that the United States would defend Israel against any Iranian threat and that the world could not risk being "blackmailed" by a nuclear-armed Tehran. I am deeply concerned about Iran, as should a lot of people be concerned about Iran," said Bush, who accuses the Islamic republic of using a civilian nuclear program as cover for efforts to get the atomic bomb.

"I'm concerned about a nontransparent society's desire to develop a nuclear weapon. The world cannot be put in a position where we can be blackmailed by a nuclear weapon," Bush said during a brief trip here.

The US president also took aim at recent anti-Israel comments by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who said that country should be wiped off the map. "I am concerned when the country of Iran's president announces his desire to see that Israel gets destroyed. Israel's our ally. We're committed to the safety of Israel, and it's a commitment we will keep," said Bush.

If Iran, which denies it seeks atomic weapons, continues to reject diplomatic efforts meant to soothe concerns, "the next logical step" is to refer Tehran to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions, said Bush.

The US president, who famously called Iran part of an "axis of evil" with North Korea and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, said he wanted "the Iranian people to hear loud and clear, and that is, we have no beef with you."

"We are worried about a government ... whose aims and objectives are not peaceful, and, therefore, we don't think that you should have the capacity to make a nuclear weapon," said Bush..."



FRANCE WARNS TERRORISTS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS RETALIATION

January 20, 2006 Voice of America News reported: "French president Jacques Chirac said Thursday that France could retaliate with nuclear weapons against states that launch terrorist attacks against it. Mr. Chirac's threat is considered a departure in terms of French defense policy. President Chirac's warning came during a visit to a French nuclear submarine base in Brittany. Eighty five-percent of France's nuclear warheads are carried on submarines.

The French president said nuclear dissuasion remained the fundamental guarantee of national security. The president said France is in the position to inflict all kinds of damage to a major power. Confronted with a regional power, he said, the choice is not inaction, but rather flexibility and reactivity. And French forces are capable of responding directly to such a power.

Mr. Chirac said that leaders of any state that uses terrorist means against France must understand they risk what he called a firm and appropriate response for his country. That could come via conventional weapons, he said, but also by what he describe as another nature, that is nuclear weapons.

The president's remarks were part of a broader speech that touched on Europe's nuclear defense. He did not mention any country or terrorist group.

His speech comes as Europe and the United States are at a standoff with Iran over Tehran's nuclear program. But the Associated Press news agency cited French officials as saying the president did not have Iran or any specific country in mind when he made his remarks.

Some analysts view Mr. Chirac's comments as generally responding to the question of why France still needs a nuclear weapons program more than a decade after the end of the Cold War. The country spends more than \$3.5 billion a year on its nuclear program..."