

PROPHETIC TIMES

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SANCTIONS NEARER AS IRAN ENRICHES NEW URANIUM

August 31, 2006 The Guardian.co.uk reported: "Iran has failed to halt its nuclear programme and is currently at work on enriching a new batch of uranium, according to a report presented to the UN that could open the way to sanctions against Tehran.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report was issued hours ahead of a deadline of midnight for Iran to give up its uranium enrichment activities, with Iranian officials promising to defy the threat of sanctions.

The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, told a crowd of thousands in the western city of Orumiyyeh earlier today that his country was united behind the programme and would defy any attempt to stop it.

"The Iranian nation will not accept for one moment any bullying, invasion and violation of its rights," he said. Late last night he reiterated his opposition to the sanctions proposals during a meeting with the former Spanish prime minister Felipe González.

"Sanctions cannot dissuade Iranians from their decision to make progress," he said. "On the contrary, many of our successes, including access to the nuclear fuel cycle and production of heavy water, have been achieved under sanctions. It would be better for the European countries to make decisions independently and settle the issue through negotiations."

Iran's nuclear programme has been a concern to western diplomats since Tehran announced success in enriching uranium in April.

Iran argues that the programme is intended solely to produce fuel for civilian nuclear reactors, but the same enrichment process can be used to create material for nuclear bombs, and diplomats fear that the civilian programme is being used as a cover for developing atomic weapons.

Iran has turned down Russian offers to supply it with enriched uranium for use in reactors, a deal that would allow it to operate nuclear power plants without being able to develop atomic weapons."..."

VENEZUELA, SYRIA REJECT US 'IMPERIALISM'

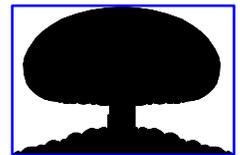
August 30, 2006 VOA News reported: "Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez has begun a three-day visit to Syria by announcing that the two countries are united against what he called "U.S. imperialism."

Mr. Chavez and Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad met Wednesday in Damascus to discuss bilateral cooperation. Mr. Al-Assad stressed that the two countries have very close positions on international issues. Support for Mr. Chavez in the Arab world has soared since Venezuela withdrew its ambassador to Israel at the start of the Israeli military offensive in Lebanon.

The Venezuelan president called Israel's attacks against Hezbollah "genocide." In response, Israel recalled its own ambassador from Venezuela. Mr. Chavez has accused Washington of plotting against him and his government, something U.S. officials deny."

GROWING FEARS OVER NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR TEST

August 30, 2006 The Guardian Unlimited reported: "International concerns about a possible North Korean nuclear test increased today with reports that Kim Jong-il may have crossed the border into China to explain his military provocations to uneasy allies in Beijing. According to the South Korean media, satellites have tracked a special North Korean train, the usual form of transport for Mr Kim, entering Chinese territory. If confirmed, it would be his second trip to Beijing in less than a year - an unheard-of flurry of diplomacy for a notoriously travel-shy figurehead.



The reports are impossible to verify, but they come amid growing signs of Chinese anger with Mr Kim over last month's missile tests, and regional anxiety about his next move. Earlier this month, the South Korean president, Roh Moo-hyun, requested an emergency summit with Beijing's leaders.

For the past two weeks, Washington and Seoul have been buzzing with speculation that Pyongyang may be preparing to test a nuclear bomb. North Korea has frequently boasted it possesses such a weapon, but has never proved it. Testing a nuclear weapon would be seen as a dangerous escalation of the crisis.

Mr Kim hopes to frighten Washington into making concessions, particularly lifting the financial restrictions on North Korea's overseas deposits. The choking of Pyongyang's foreign accounts, initiated by Washington in the name of an anti-money laundering campaign, has put Mr Kim under more pressure than any previous measure.

China has also demonstrated its frustration with the North Korean leader. Although the two countries were once described as being "as close as lips and teeth", there have been several signs of a rift in the past year.

According to customs figures, China's exports of rice, maize and wheat to North Korea have slumped by more than two thirds in the first seven months of this year to 102,000 tonnes, compared with 331,000 tonnes in the same period last year. South Korea's Chosun

Ilbo newspaper has reported a "significant decline" in oil exports. Chinese financial institutions are also said to have cooperated with US moves to freeze North Korean accounts.

"It's quite clear that relations between China and North Korea are tense now," said Shi Yinong of Renmin University in Beijing. "Since the North Korean missile test, China has been indirectly supporting US sanctions on Pyongyang. If today's visit is confirmed, it may show that Kim Jong-il wants to complain about this."

Mr Kim is said to have expressed his distrust of his country's traditional allies after Beijing and Russia supported a United Nations security resolution criticising Pyongyang for the missile tests. According to a report by the Kyodo news agency, Mr Kim said China and Russia were unreliable at a meeting of North Korea's ambassadors, all of whom were hastily recalled to Pyongyang and instructed to prepare for a strengthening of the country's deterrent power.

"It is a critical time for North Korea. They are clearly frustrated. The financial restrictions are getting tighter and the Bush administration is showing no sign of flexibility," said Peter Beck, a North Korea expert at the International Crisis Group in Seoul. "If North Korea wants to do a nuclear test, they would want to consult with China first."..."

EU NEEDS CONSTITUTION WITH CHRISTIAN REFERENCE, MERKEL SAYS

August 29, 2006 The EU Observer reported: "German chancellor Angela Merkel has suggested Europe needs a constitution that makes reference to Christianity and God following her audience with Pope Benedict XVI on Monday (29 August). The German leader, the daughter of a protestant pastor, visited the Pope at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, Italy, to discuss several issues in European and international politics, ahead of the Pope's September visit to Germany, his homeland.

We spoke about freedom of religion," Ms Merkel told journalists following the 45-minute meeting. She added "I underlined my opinion that we need a European identity in the form of a constitutional treaty and I think it should be connected to Christianity and God, as Christianity has forged Europe in a decisive way," according to press reports.

The Christian Democrat leader has previously spoken out in favour of reopening the debate on religion in the constitution as the EU considers how to tackle the deadlock after the treaty's rejection by French and Dutch voters last year. Germany has been assigned by EU member states to come up with some kind of solution to the constitutional crisis during its presidency of the union in the first six months of 2007.

Like Mrs Merkel, some leading figures of the European People's Party - the federalist centre-right pan-European group - have pointed out that a possible re-drafted treaty should include clear links to Europe's Christian heritage.

During earlier negotiations on the content of the new EU charter, Spain, Italy and Poland were among the strongest supporters of a reference to God in the treaty. But its opponents argued it could prove controversial in view of Turkey's potential membership of the EU as well as due to the strict separation of state and church in some countries, such as France. Currently, the preamble refers to Europe's religious heritage only in general terms."

EU'S SOLANA WORKING TO SET UP TALKS WITH IRANIAN NUCLEAR ENVOY

August 29, 2006 SpaceWar.com reported: "European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana is trying to set up a meeting with Iran's top nuclear negotiator as a deadline approaches for Tehran to suspend uranium enrichment, an EU diplomat said Tuesday.

"Contacts are continuing to study the possibility of a meeting" with Iran's Ali Larijani, hopefully "before the end of the month", the diplomat said on condition of anonymity. The diplomat said that Solana hoped to set up the meeting somewhere in Europe, and that it would also involve "diplomats" from the so-called EU-3 powers of Britain, France and Germany.

The UN Security Council has given Iran an August 31 deadline to suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities, and an impasse looms as Iran insists that it has no intention of abandoning such work."

HIZBULLAH: WE'RE ARMING FOR SECOND ROUND

August 31, 2006 Ynetnews.com reported: representative in Iran Muhammad Abdullah Sif al-Din, said Wednesday that Hizbullah leader has a new strategic plan to rearm ahead of the "next round against Israel."

In an interview with the Iranian news agency Fars, al-Din said: "No one can promise us that Israel won't attack again. Whoever lives as a neighbor to the Zionist regime is in danger and must not save any effort to obtain all of the means to defend himself. We are convinced that there still danger and the situation has not yet been solved. We must, all the time, prepare ourselves for self-defense and to plan for the next stage."

During an interview, al-Din was asked about Hizbullah's military situation after the war. "Our situation is very good, the Israelis didn't manage to strike Hizbullah's military command and our ability to launch missiles. In the first days we launched 100 missiles and in recent days we fired 350 missiles a day. So we have no problem from a military perspective," he replied."..."