



## News from the Nations

### Iranian threats

A commentator in the magazine *Jerusalem Report* has the following to say about the threat of Iran to Israel in particular: "Iran no longer maintains the pretence of acting as a decent neighbour to Iraq, or tries to make us believe that it is adhering to the rules of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The warnings of what will happen to Israel if it attacks Iran's nuclear facilities have become apocalyptically violent. The message from Teheran reaching the perpetrators of Palestinian terror is that, given the disintegration of the Fatah faction, the agenda for attacks will from now on be set by the emissaries of the Iranian elite 'Revolutionary Guards'. A recent undated photo of the interior of Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant southwest of Teheran was released recently by the country's Atomic Energy Commission. While insisting its nuclear programme is peaceful, Iran warns that it would retaliate if Israel attacks its controversial nuclear facilities. Iran said recently it would destroy Israel's Dimona nuclear reactor if the Jewish state were to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. A senior commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Muhammad Zolqadr, warned that Iranian missiles could reach Dimona. 'If Israel fires a missile into the Bushehr nuclear power plant, it has to say goodbye forever to its Dimona nuclear facility, where it produces and stockpiles nuclear weapons'".

### ISRAEL CHALLENGES IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS

According to the Daily Telegraph, Israel has admitted that it is buying 500 'bunker-buster' bombs, which could hit Iran's nuclear facilities. The BLU-109 bombs, which can penetrate more than seven feet of reinforced concrete, are among 'smart' munitions being sold to Israel under America's military aid programme. Israel regards Iran as its greatest strategic enemy and has issued thinly-veiled threats of military action to try to stop Teheran's nuclear programme if diplomatic efforts fail to halt it. The International Atomic Energy Agency recently gave Teheran an informal deadline to halt all aspects of its controversial uranium enrichment programme by November. However, Iran has announced that it will continue converting thirty-seven tons of yellowcake—milled uranium oxide—into uranium hexafluoride, the feed-material for uranium enrichment. Western diplomats believe that America, or Israel, could resort to air strikes against nuclear facilities. Iran has placed some of its facilities, such as the large Natanz enrichment plant, in protected underground sites. Teheran has vowed to retaliate against any attack, and said that it might launch pre-emptive strikes if it felt threatened. At an annual military parade in Teheran a banner proclaiming "Israel must be wiped off the map" was draped on the side of a 450-mile Shahab-2/3 missile.

### Nuclear designs in Damascus

According to a report in the *Jerusalem Post*, "Together with the energy expended at attempts to block Iran's drive toward acquiring nuclear weapons, has come a growing concern that all this activity has served to mask a potentially more sinister, more dangerous development, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Syria, perhaps with the assistance of its Iranian ally. Alarm bells are now ringing in Washington and some European capitals over reports that Syria might have acquired gas centrifuges, which would provide Damascus with the ability to produce enriched uranium for the development of nuclear weapons. Damascus might have travelled farther down the road to acquiring nuclear weapons than anyone had previously dared to guess. If Syria has made progress in the nuclear field, it almost certainly occurred via the clandestine nuclear network set up by renegade scientist Abdull Khan, who is revered in his native Pakistan as the Father of the Islamic Bomb. The 'nuclear supermarket' covered a huge stage from Asia to Europe and the Middle East. Middlemen working for the network brought parts from at least half a dozen countries, including Japan, Malaysia, South Africa, Germany and at least two other European states. The network has offered its customers—known to have been Libya, Iran and North Korea—a comprehensive service of advanced centrifuge machines, components and designs, as well as training for operating the machines".

**Religious freedom threatened**

Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan and Vietnam were recently added to a list of countries "of particular concern" by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. Others already on the list are Burma, China, North Korea, Iran and Sudan. Afghanistan's new constitution includes a clause stating that "no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of Islam". The commission was concerned that similar laws may eventually be enshrined in the constitution of Iraq.

**Europe's future**

According to a reporter, "A pop-art collage mounted in a tent outside the European Commission narrates fifty years of EU history and projects events into the future in an unusually frank display of European ambition. Segments, sketched across eighty yards of canvas, predict that the 21st century will be the 'European Century' as the EU pushes its borders deep into Eurasia, North Africa and the Middle East, and comes to dominate world affairs through its vast legal and moral reach. Under the heading, 'The Roman Empire returns', it says the EU will be renamed 'The Union' once it grows to fifty states over the next three decades. Casting the United States as the villain of modern times, it says: 'The lonely superpower can bribe, bully or impose its will almost anywhere in the world, but when its back is turned, its policy is weakened'. Entitled 'The Image of Europe', the display is not a formal expression of EU policy but it captures views that can be heard every day in the corridors and canteens of the Union's institutions. The exhibit was coordinated by the European Commission and sponsored by the European Council".

**Israel and Egypt**

Concern has been expressed by a writer in the Jerusalem Post that vacationing Israelis continue to flock to Sinai (part of Egypt) despite repeated and increasingly dire official warnings of terrorist attacks. Because nothing has happened since previous warnings were issued, the public seems to be treating advisories from counter-terrorism experts and the Israeli foreign ministry as akin to the boy who cried wolf. Over the past summer alone, an estimated 300,000 Israelis are said to have sought rest and recreation south of the border. The Sinai thus replaces Turkey as Israelis' most popular tourist destination. Complacency reigns supreme. Not only is Egypt, so favoured by Israelis, not friendly, it is in fact hostile. The peace Israel expected was reduced to a very cold truce. Egypt sponsors anti-Israel resolutions in international forums and is a routine proponent of any available outrageous initiative. It has long been leading a campaign against Israel's nuclear capability, a campaign the motive of which is clearly not that of a friendly nation. Egypt withdrew its ambassador from Tel Aviv and refuses to reinstate him, in flagrant violation of its peace treaty undertakings. The most serious breach involves the refusal to take sustained and effective action against the subterranean arms smuggling from Sinai into Gaza. Egypt generally turns a blind eye to the Palestinian tunnelling, save for occasional showy 'discoveries' of a tunnel or two. The report states: "If Egypt does indeed launch war against Israel, it could ultimately include weapons of mass destruction. It is up to the world to prevent this disaster, if it is still possible".

**UN bias against Israel**

A report by the American Jewish Committee has criticised the UN for what it terms anti-Israel bias. The report, "One-Sided: The Relentless Campaign against Israel in the United Nations", provides a detailed look at the organisation's Israel-related resolutions and country-by-country voting records.

**NEW WATER SOURCE FOR ISRAEL**

According to the Jerusalem Post, a new private desalination plant began operating recently and will supply an annual two million cubic metres of drinking water. The Hof Hacarmel water desalination plant in Atlit, on the Mediterranean coast south of Haifa, removes the salt from brackish water and cost \$1.5 million to build. Most of the output will supply Carmel coast communities and Haifa. The remaining water will go to other areas in the country. Mekorot national water company director-general Rouen Wolfman said the inclusion of private suppliers in the water system is a Mekorot company policy, and that "The addition of another two million cubic metres of water with the Atlit plant is an important step in improving and assuring the water supply". Together with the planned Ma'ayan Zvi desalination plant, the Hof Hacarmel Water Association will eventually supply a total of four million cubic metres to Mekorot every year. There are plans to build an additional two plants to increase the annual total to six million cubic metres.