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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Russian Warships Heading for Syria

By Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz August 26, 2018 , 3:44 pm

“You are My war club, [My] weapons of battle; With you I clubbed nations, With you I destroyed kingdoms.” Jeremiah 51:20 (The Israel Bible™)

It was reported Turkey sighted three Russian warships passing through the Bosphorus last Thursday en route to Syria.

Debka File, an Israeli military intelligence website, reported on Saturday that the armada, composed of the Krivak Class Pytlivy missile frigate, the Tapir class LST (tank landing ship) Orsk, and a landing craft, the Nikolai Filchenko. The Filchenko is the largest landing craft in the Russian fleet capable of transporting 300 soldiers and either 20 tanks and trucks or 40 armored personnel carriers.

“Debka File’s military sources conclude that the two large Russian landing craft consigned from the Black Sea to Syria are almost certainly carrying Russian marines or special forces for attacking rebel groups in Idlib from the sea or the coast,” the site reported.

Idlib is one of the final holdouts for rebel troops fighting the regime of Syrian President Bashar al Assad. Russia already has a significant military presence in Syria to support Assad. Debka reported that approximately 60-70,000 Al-Qaeda affiliated rebels with heavy weaponry and armored vehicles have reportedly answered a call by the Jabhat al-Nusra terrorist organization to begin an offensive to conquer Aleppo and Hama. The rebels are supported militarily and financially by Turkey. The conflict in Syria has set Russia and Turkey increasingly at odds.

The US Navy’s destroyer Sullivans with 56 cruise missiles on its board arrived in the Persian Gulf several days ago and a B-1B strategic bomber of the US Air Force armed with AGM-158 JASSM air-to-surface missiles was redeployed to the Al Udeid air base in Qatar

Iran's Strait of Hormuz control stokes tensions, could prompt US response

Travis Fedschun By Travis Fedschun | Fox News

Iran says it has control of Gulf, Strait of Hormuz: report

A major shipping route located between Oman and Iran where nearly one-third of the world's sea-traded oil passes through daily may become a new flashpoint after a top Iranian Navy general said Monday that the country has taken full control of the Strait of Hormuz.

The head of the navy of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Gen. Alireza Tangsiri, said that Iran had full control of both the Persian Gulf itself and the Strait of Hormuz that leads into it, Reuters reported.

The strait, which at its narrowest point is 21 miles wide, has shipping lanes that are 2 miles wide in each direction and is the only sea passage from many of the world's largest oil producers to the Indian Ocean.

"It's a very contentious area," retired Lt. Col. Bob Maginnis told Fox News' "Your World with Neil Cavuto" earlier this month.

Iran conducts 'swarming' exercise in Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is where most of the oil from Saudi Arabia passes through, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The Saudis have constructed pipelines to bypass the strait, but a majority of crude oil is shipped by sea, meaning that any action by Iran to halt shipping may impact consumers across the world.

"The blockage of the Strait of Hormuz, even temporarily, could lead to substantial increases in total energy costs," the agency said in a 2012 report.

At the beginning of August, Iran began a large-scale exercise in the Strait of Hormuz involving more than 50 small boats, practicing "swarming" operations that could potentially shut down the vital waterway if ever deployed for real. The drill came after President Trump pulled the U.S. out of a landmark nuclear accord with Iran and leaders of both countries exchanged fiery rhetoric.

The country routinely operates small boats in the Strait of Hormuz and the surrounding area, and has often threatened to shut down the highly traveled waterway. A check of conditions on MaritimeTraffic.com on Monday showed that conditions appeared to be normal, with heavy maritime traffic through the strait.

In recent weeks Iranian President Hassan Rouhani renewed the threat, saying that if sanctions threatened Iran's crude oil exports, the rest of the Middle East's exports would be threatened as well.

"They're causing problems once again, as predicted, in the Strait of Hormuz," Maginnis said. "This is something we've grown accustomed to."

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) transits the Strait of Hormuz, in this November 12, 2011 file photo. Iran's army chief told the United States that a U.S. aircraft carrier which left the area because of Iranian naval exercises should not return to the Gulf, the state news agency reported on January 3, 2012. Military officials have said that U.S. and allies train to be able to insure that freedom of navigation continues in the Strait of Hormuz. (Reuters)

But if Iran were to follow through with any bluster to close down the vital shipping channel, a potential U.S. response would be swift.

Gen. Joseph Votel, head of U.S. Central Command, said earlier this month that Iran was showcasing its military capabilities and has the ability to plant mines and explosive boats in the waterway, as well as use missiles and radar along the coast. He stressed the U.S. and allies routinely train for that possibility and are prepared to insure that freedom of navigation and commerce continues in those waters.

U.S officials say that Iran has the ability to ability to plant mines and explosive boats in the waterway, in addition to using missiles and radar along the coast. (Reuters)

"We are aware of what's going on and we remain ready to protect ourselves," he told reporters.

Fox News security analyst Walid Phares told Fox Business Network's "Varney & Co." that the Iranians can damage the international passage "if they want," but that the U.S. can easily "intercept them, stop them, and damage their own capacity."

The Strait of Hormuz, which at its narrowest point is 21 miles wide, has shipping lanes that are two miles wide in each direction and is the only sea passage from many of the world's largest oil producers to the Indian Ocean. (Reuters)

"It's kind of a brinkmanship capacity of gaming with us," Phares said. "I think the United States is very much attentive to what they are doing, and will respond if the Iranians will cross that red line."

President Obama's former National Security Adviser Jim Jones, a four-star general, said in an interview earlier this month the Iranian Navy should be "wiped out" if any action is taken to block maritime traffic.

"I personally would like to see, if they ever did something in the Strait of Hormuz, I would like to see their navy disappear," Jones told The National.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps conducted a 'high speed intercept' of the USS NitzeVideo Iranian vessels harass US Navy destroyer in Strait of Hormuz
Jones, who served as national security adviser for Obama from 2009 to 2010, also told the National that Iran's government is an "an existential threat to the region."

Iran has been active in Syria, backing the government of President Bashar Assad, while also stoking violence in the southern part of the country and triggering military counterattacks from Israel. The U.S. and Saudi Arabia have repeatedly condemned Iran for providing missiles to Yemeni Houthi rebels, who have fired toward Riyadh.

The Iranian officials recently threatened to block the waterway in retaliation for any hostile action by the U.S. government amid President Trump's remarks in July, which were prompted by the Iranian President Rouhani saying the U.S. risks the "mother of all wars" with Iran.

Trump called for Rouhani to stop the rhetoric or – in caps lock – "suffer the consequences the like of which few throughout history have ever suffered before. We are no longer a country that will stand for your demented words of violence and death. Be cautious!"

Donald J. Trump



@realDonaldTrump

To Iranian President Rouhani: NEVER, EVER THREATEN THE UNITED STATES AGAIN OR YOU WILL SUFFER CONSEQUENCES THE LIKES OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE EVER SUFFERED BEFORE. WE ARE NO LONGER A COUNTRY THAT WILL STAND FOR YOUR DEMENTED WORDS OF VIOLENCE & DEATH. BE CAUTIOUS!

Just over two weeks ago, Iran test-fired a ballistic missile as a brazen display of defiance, which coincided with the naval exercise, three U.S. officials with knowledge of the launch told Fox News at the time.

While the U.S. military publicly acknowledged the naval activity, the missile test from an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps base in Bandar-e-Jask in southeastern Iran has not been previously reported. The launch was detected by U.S. spy satellites.

The Future Of Warfare - Rise Of The Drones

Britt Gillette

If you wanted to catch a glimpse of future warfare, you would've done well to watch the winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. The opening ceremony featured a dazzling display of 1,200 synchronized drones.

They lit up the sky and arranged themselves to form various Olympic-themed images.

Previous generations would've thought this was nothing short of magic. But our generation? For us, it went largely unnoticed.

We're used to seeing drones traverse the skies. Few people think twice when they see a single drone hovering in the air.

Multiple drones moving in tandem and quickly shifting directions might catch our attention for a moment, but we don't give those much thought either. Maybe we should.

In fact, as you watch video of the Olympic drones, ask yourself this question - what if those drones were armed?

The Future of Warfare

Synchronized drones let us see the future of warfare. Why do I say that? Let me ask you another question. Have you ever seen a large flock of birds flying in unison? They look like a cloud. And the whole flock can shift left, right, up, or down - all in a split second.

Despite their quick shifts, these birds act as one. They aren't disorganized or disjointed. They fly in perfect harmony as if they have a single mind. We observe similar behavior in schools of fish, bees, locusts, gnats, and all sorts of animals.

Now, imagine one of these groups is coming to get you. That's right. Imagine a swarm of bees is coming after you. Would a shotgun do you much good? Not really. You can fire into a swarm of bees, and you might take out one or more.

But you know what? The swarm will keep coming. This is because the power of a swarm is decentralized. A single strike won't stop it.

Sound scary? It should. Because this is the future of warfare. It's called swarm technology. As technology advances, synchronized drones will get smaller and smaller, faster and faster, and ever more powerful. In the near future, one nation will use them to attack a nation only armed with conventional weapons.

What do you think will happen when combat drones traveling like a swarm of bees attack a conventional army? How effective will tank fire or heat seeking missiles be when directed at a swarm? That's right. They'll be just as effective as firing a shotgun at a swarm of bees.

Have no doubt, this is where our world is headed. Those nations who are first to develop swarm technology will rule over those nations who are slow to adapt. History has proved this lesson time and again. Think about it. Charging columns of soldiers were effective once - until machine guns arrived.

Racing soldiers on horseback were once effective too - until armored tanks arrived. We can all cite

countless examples of new military technologies making tried-and-true weapons and tactics obsolete. The same will prove true with swarm technology. And it will completely transform the world's current balance of power.

World War III

For years, we've heard the next world war will be the final war on earth. Conventional wisdom says it's impossible for any nation to survive WWIII. Conventional wisdom says WWIII will annihilate all of humanity. Conventional wisdom is wrong.

Why do I say this? Because conventional wisdom is based on the idea of mutual assured destruction (MAD). MAD is the belief no one can win a war between two nuclear powers. It's the idea that fear of total destruction will restrain any nation from provoking war with a nuclear power.

Conventional wisdom assumes the doctrine of MAD will rule the world forever. In the current era, that may prove true. But it won't be true forever. Because a day is soon coming when MAD will be obsolete.

We're about to enter a period of time marked by rapid technological change. If you think we've already been living in such a period, you're right. But the past hundred years of progress pales in comparison to what's around the corner.

Swarm technology is only one of many new technologies threatening to upset the balance of power and render MAD obsolete. Technologies like molecular manufacturing will allow nations to scale the size of their military forces. With molecular manufacturing, a nation could create billions of swarming drones at relatively low cost and in a short timeframe.

Technologies like artificial intelligence will give nations the ability to direct those swarms, analyze targets, and attack enemy networks. In such a world, the list of potential threats and attack scenarios will multiply, creating suspicion and distrust among the world's superpowers.

A digital or high-tech Pearl Harbor will prove fatal. And that makes the world much more dangerous. Because fear of such an attack makes a pre-emptive strike much more likely.

What the Bible Says

None of this should come as a surprise. Despite the idea WWIII will never come. And despite the idea WWIII will lead to complete global destruction, the Bible says otherwise. WWIII will take place.

The Bible describes the Antichrist and his war of global conquest (Revelation 6:2-4), revealing there will be "war and slaughter everywhere" (Revelation 6:4). Yet the world survives this global conquest.

How can this be? Because all eras come to an end. And the era of MAD will soon be over. New technologies will disrupt the foundation of international peace.

Swarm technology, molecular manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies will give unprecedented power to the one who wields them. Perhaps these technologies are the "great sword" described in Revelation 6 (Revelation 6:4). Perhaps not.

Either way, the result will be the same. Emerging technology will put an end to MAD. The result will be a global war with death and destruction everywhere. And when the dust settles, a global empire will rule the world. The signs are everywhere. Jesus is coming!

How facial recognition technology is creeping into your life

The Week Staff

Facial recognition technology could revolutionize everyday life. But at what cost? Here's everything you need to know:



How does the technology work?

It scans faces, either in person or on a photograph, and measures distinguishing facial features such as eye position, eyebrow shape, and nostril angle. This creates a distinctive digital "faceprint" — much like a fingerprint — which the system then runs through a database to check for a match. Law enforcement agencies have had faces on file for decades; their databases provide them with the identified person's name, age, address, and any criminal

history. But facial recognition is increasingly being used by commercial firms too. Facebook's system for "tagging" a photo — identifying who is in the picture — is now as accurate as users doing it themselves. Apple's new iPhone X can be unlocked when its owner simply looks at it. As the technology becomes more widespread, there are growing fears that it will erode privacy and be misused by bad actors. "We need to ask ourselves," says Kelly Gates, author of *Our Biometric Future*, "whether a world of ubiquitous automated identification is really one we want to build."

Who uses this technology?

Facial recognition is most common in China, where people can use it to pay for a coffee, visit tourist attractions, and even withdraw cash from ATMs. Several Chinese cities use face-scanning cameras to shame jaywalkers, by flashing their names and photographs on public display boards. But the West isn't lagging too far behind. In Europe, high-end hotels and retailers use facial recognition cameras to identify VIPs and celebrities as they enter, in order to give them preferential treatment. Several U.S. airlines are looking to replace boarding passes with face scanners. Department stores are using facial recognition to monitor how customers react to certain product displays. And these developments are only the tip of the iceberg.

What else is coming?

Doctors have already started using facial recognition to help them diagnose rare genetic diseases that produce distinctive facial characteristics; as the technology improves, they should be able to do the same for more common conditions, such as autism. Shops will soon be able to identify individual customers as soon as they walk in the store, and try to sell them specific items based on their interests and previous transactions. Dubai International Airport is scrapping one terminal's security clearance counter altogether, and replacing it with a short tunnel fitted with 80 face-scanning cameras hidden behind video screens. Law enforcement agencies are also ramping up their facial recognition capacity.

In what way?

Through various state and federal databases, the FBI now has access to photographs of half the U.S. adult population, according to a major 2017 report by the Georgetown Law Center on Privacy and Technology. Eighty percent of these people don't have a criminal record; their faces are on file solely because they have some form of state ID, such as a resident's card or a driver's license. Several police departments, including Los Angeles', have even started using body cams for "real-time" facial recognition of people officers are talking to on the street or during traffic stops. But the system is far from flawless. One in seven of the FBI's searches identifies an innocent party, even when the actual culprit is in the database. And facial recognition has always been less reliable for people with darker skin — because of the way light

reflects off it — who are already arrested in disproportionately high numbers. "If you're black, you're more likely to be affected by this technology, and that technology is more likely to be wrong," says Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.). "That's a hell of a combination."

What are the other risks?

The biggest danger is that authoritarian governments will use the technology to surveil and control their populations. Stanford University researchers made an algorithm that guessed someone's sexual orientation from a picture of their face with 81 percent accuracy; humans managed only 61 percent. In countries where homosexuality is illegal, that could be a dangerous weapon. FindFace, a Russian app, can identify strangers by comparing their photo to more than 200 million social media profile pictures, and it's been used to harass people. "Like any new tool," says Nicholas Rule, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, "if it gets into the wrong hands, it can be used for ill purposes."

Is there any regulation?

European regulators have proposed that all biometric data, including "faceprints," belong to their owner and thus require consent to use. But U.S. lawmakers appear relatively unconcerned: Only Illinois and Texas have laws regulating facial recognition; of 52 police agencies that have acknowledged using the technology, only one obtained legislative approval. Facial recognition still isn't as good as it is in the movies, with computers instantaneously identifying every individual in a huge crowd. But it's not that far off. "From a technological perspective, the ability to successfully conduct mass-scale facial recognition in the wild seems inevitable," says Carnegie Mellon professor Alessandro Acquisti. "Whether as a society we will accept that technology, however, is another story."

Beating the algorithm

Tricking high-end facial recognition systems isn't easy. Wired magazine hired top Hollywood artists to create silicone face masks that would trick an iPhone X into believing it was seeing its owner. They failed. But there are ways to get the better of less-advanced facial recognition systems. While wearing a regular hat, scarf, or pair of glasses makes little difference, particular patterns can confuse the software. Researchers at Carnegie Mellon created oversize colored glasses that not only masked the wearer's identity but also made the software think the person was a celebrity. Others have created patterned scarves that look, to machines, like human faces. Some have even dabbled with face paint — covering up parts of their cheeks with specific blocks of colors — to "dazzle" the scanner. But there's one major flaw in all these anti-surveillance techniques: They make you stick out like a sore thumb. "The very thing that makes you invisible to computers," says tech writer Robinson Meyer in *The Atlantic*, "makes you glaringly obvious to other humans."