

Newsbytes

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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

Bethel Church Invokes ‘Lord of the Rings’ Spirit to End Racism

By JEFF MAPLES JULY 13, 2020

Just when you thought that the charismatic underworld of Bethel Church couldn’t get any crazier, there is always something else that comes along to blow your mind. From grave-sucking to performing a seance to try to raise people from the dead, witchcraft is at the core of Bethel, Redding’s theology.

Bethel Church in Redding, CA is pastored by Bill Johnson who claims to be an Apostle — that is, he claims Apostolic authority just like the twelve men during Christ’s time on Earth. Bethel Redding, like all cults, is filled with aberrant, unbiblical teachings and doctrines of demons, including false manifestations of the Holy Spirit, grave-sucking, and the Prosperity Gospel.

Now, unsurprisingly, Bethel has invoked the spirits of other religions as a method to eradicate cultural evils and placate the world in its endless pursuit of Utopia—something that cannot be achieved apart from Christ’s return.

Churches Report Chicago Officials are Threatening to Bulldoze Their Facilities for Not Complying with COVID-19 Mandates

This is heinously unconstitutional.

Shane Trejo

The lawyer for two Chicago churches has reported that city officials informed his clients that they would consider bulldozing their facilities if they do not comply with COVID-19 edicts.

Matt Staver, the founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, said on Wednesday that the city is classifying his clients as “public nuisances.” He said they were issued a letter declaring that the city “has the power and duty to cause all nuisances affecting the health of the public to be abated.” The letter threatened a “summary abatement,” which would mean the destruction of the facilities without due process.

Staver said during an appearance on the “Todd Starnes Radio Show” that he is seeking an emergency injunction and hopes to take the case to the Supreme Court. The motion for the injunction is headed to the desk of SCOTUS Justice Brett Kavanaugh right now.

Rev. Cristian Ionescu, one of the pastors being represented in this case, also told Starnes that he has

received citations from the city for violating COVID-19 policies. Metro Praise International's Pastor Joe Wyrostek reported receiving the "summary abatement" threatening his facility with destruction if he holds a service with more than 10 people.

"We are very disappointed with all of this, including not being considered as essential in the beginning, as a church," Wyrostek said to NBC Chicago.

Even as violent crime spikes, Chicago city officials use limited police forces to snoop on churches and enforce shutdown mandates in Christian places of worship. This is part of a nationwide trend of left-wing government bureaucrats using the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to attack Christianity.

War Drums - Iran & Israel On Brink Of Conflict

Over the past several weeks, a series of "mystery explosions" has happened at very strategically sensitive locations inside Iran, and it has become obvious that what we are witnessing is not just a bunch of random accidents.

For years, the Israeli government has pledged that the Iranians will never be allowed to develop nuclear weapons, and several of the sites where the mystery explosions have taken place have direct connections to Iran's nuclear program.

For example, there was a very large explosion at Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment facility on July 2nd, and it is being reported that some officials believe that this explosion was caused by a "powerful bomb".

The following comes from the Jerusalem Post:

Israel was behind an explosion and fire at Iran's Natanz nuclear complex caused by a "powerful bomb," a Middle Eastern intelligence official with knowledge of the incident told The New York Times on Monday.

A member of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps confirmed to the Times that an explosive was used in the incident as well. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

Of course there have been several other "mystery explosions" as well, and there is speculation that "computer viruses similar to the Stuxnet virus" may have been involved in at least some of the blasts...

Five recent explosions in Iran may have been caused by computer viruses similar to the Stuxnet virus that disabled Iranian centrifuges in 2010.

Two of the blasts took place at power plants, one at a missile research, development and production site, one at a new uranium enrichment centrifuge center, and the last (if it can be considered part of the attacks) in downtown Tehran at a medical facility that could have been a cover for nuclear operations such as a hidden command center.

It has become clear that the Trump administration does not intend to take military action to stop Iran's nuclear program, so the Israeli government has been forced into a position where it must make a very tough choice. Either Israel must be willing to accept Iran as a nuclear power or Israel must do something to stop it from happening.

At this point, it has been confirmed that the "industrial shed" that was destroyed during the explosion at the Natanz uranium enrichment facility "was in fact a new site for assembling centrifuges", and that would definitely be a logical target for the Israelis to hit.

When asked about the "mystery explosions", the following is what Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz had to say about them...

When Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz was asked if Israel had anything to do with "mysterious explosions," he reportedly told Israel Radio: "Not every incident that transpires in Iran necessarily has something to do with us."

"All those systems are complex, they have very high safety constraints and I'm not sure they always know how to maintain them," he said, according to Reuters.

Obviously that is not a denial.

Meanwhile, it is also being reported that the Mossad has "thwarted a series of planned Iranian attacks on Israeli embassies"...

Israeli spy agency Mossad claims it has recently thwarted a series of planned Iranian attacks on Israeli embassies around the world.

The intelligence bureau has halted 'terrorist' plans in Europe and elsewhere, according to a report by Hebrew-language broadcaster Channel 12 which said that Israel's arch-enemy Iran was behind the plots.

The Iranians are becoming increasingly frustrated by the success of Israeli covert operations, and they want to find ways to strike back. Embassies are typically easy targets, but thankfully the Mossad has apparently been one step ahead of all Iranian efforts to target embassies so far.

Needless to say, all of this is happening at a time when tensions in the entire region are rapidly coming to a boil.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu keeps insisting that he is about to move forward with his plan to to annex portions of Judea and Samaria, and if that happens there will inevitably be a violent response by the Palestinians.

In fact, the Times of Israel is reporting that "Fatah and Hamas are in agreement that there should be a popular uprising if the controversial plan goes ahead"...

An adviser to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas warned Saturday there was a possibility of a third intifada if the Israeli government goes ahead with its plan to annex parts of the West Bank.

The Kan public broadcaster reported that Nabil Shaath told the Arabic-language arm of the France 24 network that Palestinian rivals Fatah and Hamas are in agreement that there should be a popular uprising if the controversial plan goes ahead.

And the truth is that rocket fire has already started. On Sunday, Israeli planes hit targets in the Gaza Strip after "a barrage of rocket fire into southern Israel"...

Israeli aircraft struck targets in the northern Gaza Strip on Sunday following a barrage of rocket fire into southern Israel. No casualties were reported on either side.

In a statement, the Israeli military said attack helicopters and fighter jets struck "underground infrastructure" belonging to Gaza's ruling Hamas terrorist group.

Earlier Sunday, the army said three rockets were fired by Gaza terrorists toward Israel, setting off air-raid

sirens. It said one of the rockets was intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome air defense system; according to Channel 12 TV the other two landed in open areas. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the rocket fire. A number of armed terrorist groups operate in Gaza.

The bottom line is that the Middle East has been on the precipice of a major war for years, and it certainly isn't going to take much to push things over the edge.

If the Iranians do not stop their nuclear program, the Israelis are going to continue to hit them, and that will eventually spark a war.

And if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu goes ahead with his plan to annex portions of Judea and Samaria, that is almost certain to spark a war too.

We have reached such a critical moment, and it appears to be just a matter of time before a great conflict erupts.

Apocalyptic Pests: Locust Swarms Hit Asia And South America, Affecting Millions

Carlie Porterfield Jun 27, 2020

On Saturday, a swarm of desert locusts overran Gurugram, a city in India about 18 miles southwest of New Delhi, as local people were advised to make loud noises to scare off the bugs, like banging kitchen utensils together and playing loud music.

India is facing its worst locust swarm in decades, and farmers have expressed concern about how the infestation will affect their crops this summer during the next planting season.

This week, Argentina and Brazil issued warnings as a 9-square-mile locust swarm entered Argentina from Paraguay as it headed in Uruguay's direction.

Brazil declared a "crop emergency" Friday in two states in the south just in case it makes its way into Brazil, though weather conditions indicated it was unlikely to do so and seems to be making its way toward Uruguay.

Desert locusts are the most ravenous of the species and at their worst could cover 20% of land on earth and potentially jeopardize 10% of the world's livelihood, as a locust swarm of just more than a third of a square mile can eat the same amount of food in a single day as 35,000 people, according to the United Nations.

Swarms of locusts in Christian traditions have typically been associated with the end of the world, stemming from a prophecy of the apocalypse recorded in the Book of Revelations, the last book of the New Testament. Locusts are mentioned throughout the Old and New Testaments.

The Covid-19 pandemic has complicated locust relief. In April, Kenyan officials told AP that pandemic crackdowns slowed efforts to fight the infestation, as crossing borders became more difficult and the delivery of necessary pesticides was held up. Locusts are believed to be the oldest migratory pest in the world. While they are related to ordinary grasshoppers, they stand apart in their evolutionary ability to change behavior mid-life and form massive swarms that can migrate over far distances. Locust clouds have been recorded travelling upwards of 120 miles per day.

How Israel began seeing Turkey as a threat instead of a partner

June 26 middleeasteye.net

Turkish moves in Libya, East Jerusalem and Yemen are drawing Israeli interest and concern

Israeli military and security chiefs are increasingly worried about what they term as "Turkey's expanded encroachment" in the Middle East.

Turkey's efforts to elevate its political, economic, cultural and military interests, spreading from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, are also a major concern for Israeli allies and partners in the region: Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraqi Kurdistan, the United Arab Emirates and eastern Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar.

Ankara has already established its presence and influence in Syria, Iraq, the besieged Gaza Strip, occupied East Jerusalem, Somalia, Sudan and Libya, and most recently is showing a growing interest in Yemen.

The French newsletter Intelligence Online reported earlier this month that MIT, the Turkish intelligence agency, has formed strong ties with Yemen's Islah party, which identifies with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood.

According to the report, the main vehicle to enhance its interests is via IHH, a Turkish relief and humanitarian group that is sending aid to Yemen.

Despite being a Saudi proxy that has fought the Houthis for years, Islah has no qualms about cooperating with Turkey.

In 2010, IHH famously sent Mavi Marmara, a ship loaded with humanitarian supplies and manned by Turkish and international pro-Palestine activists, to the Gaza Strip. The boat was stopped and raided by Israeli naval commandos, in a violent incident which resulted in the death of 10 Turkish activists.

Three years later, the Israeli government agreed to compensate the families of the victims with a payment of \$21m. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apologised to Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was then the Turkish premier.

Netanyahu and his security chiefs hoped that the gesture would help to smooth relations between the two countries. That hasn't happened.

Soured relations

Though economic ties have remained very good over the past seven years, with mutual trade and tourism increasing, intelligence and security ties have sunk to their lowest ebb.

Before that, Turkey and Israel had formed a formidable strategic partnership that had lasted nearly 50 years.

Agents from Israel's Mossad and Turkey's MIT met regularly, shared intelligence and assisted each other in operations against common enemies, especially Syria.

Israeli defence contractors sold Turkey military hardware that included tanks, missiles, drones, artillery and intelligence equipment, as well as upgrading the avionics of warplanes. Between 1985 and 2000 these deals were worth more than \$5bn.

But over the past decade, while Erdogan consolidated his power at home and realised that Turkey's hopes and dreams of joining the European Union were fading away, he distanced himself from Israel.

Israeli leaders accustomed to his temper are not particularly worried about Erdogan's diatribes against the occupation and atrocities against the Palestinians.

Agents from Israel's Mossad and Turkey's MIT met regularly, shared intelligence and assisted each other in operations against common enemies, especially Syria

What they are concerned about is Turkey's close encounters with Hamas's military wing.

According to the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security service, Salah al-Aruri, a top Hamas commander who in 2007 was deported by Israel, set up his headquarters in Turkey. He is now rotating between Beirut and Istanbul, allegedly planning attacks against Israeli targets. Turkish officials have repeatedly denied the allegations.

Israeli police and the Shin Bet are also closely monitoring Turkey's increased activity in occupied East Jerusalem via Tika, the official Turkish government aid agency.

Tika is donating money and food to Palestinians in East Jerusalem and has helped to open a coffee shop, hostel and cinema there. Israeli authorities claim that under the guise of cultural and humanitarian work, Turkey is promoting the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as Erdogan's grandiose vision of restoring the glory days of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled Palestine for centuries until World War One.

In Iraq and to a lesser degree Syria, Israeli intelligence worked closely with the US, Nato and Jordan to assist the Kurdish forces that fought against the Islamic State (IS) group.

This cooperation was an extension of the longstanding clandestine collaboration between Israel and the Iraqi Kurds in the 1960s and 1970s. The Kurds fit into the Israeli strategic concept known as the "Peripheral Alliance," which seeks alliances between the Jewish state and ethnic and religious minorities in Arab-Muslim countries in the Middle East.

But Israel's biggest headache nowadays is in Libya.

The country has been of an interest to Israel's intelligence and military establishment for four reasons. Firstly, because of its location on the Mediterranean. Secondly, due to its proximity to Egypt, Israel's enemy turned strategic partner.

Thirdly, Libya drew interest for being a haven for terrorists during the rule of Muammar Gaddafi. After the collapse of the Gaddafi regime and as looted weapons from military warehouses were conveyed from Libya to Sinai and into the hands of Hamas in Gaza, Israel reached out to eastern Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar.

With the help of Egyptian intelligence, which also has strong interests in Libya, Mossad officials met on numerous occasions with Haftar and his military chiefs. A few weeks ago, it was reported that Israeli weapons were sent to his forces, facilitated by the UAE, which is also supporting Haftar.

The fourth reason is a mixture of strategic and economic motives. After Erdogan decided to distance Turkey from Israel, a new regional partnership emerged. It was based on the old dictum of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". Bound by their rivalry with Turkey, Israel became best friends with Cyprus and Greece.

As part of this new tripartite alliance, the three countries signed an agreement to construct EastMed, a pipeline to carry Israeli and Cypriot gas from their Mediterranean fields to Greece and then on to the rest of Europe.

But Turkey's recent intervention in Libya stands in the way. Ankara sides with the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) in the war against Haftar, who is supported by Russia, Egypt, UAE and Israel.

In recent weeks, Turkish-backed forces in western Libya have recaptured several key towns and military bases formerly held by Haftar.

In November 2019, Turkey and the GNA signed a maritime delimitation agreement, which was roundly rejected by Haftar, along with the governments of Greece, Egypt, Cyprus and France.

Israel worries that the Turkish move is intended only for one purpose: to obstruct plans to build the EastMed. Nevertheless, despite the rivalry and sometimes even hostility between Israel and Turkey, the two countries leave some backchannels open.

An Israeli official told Middle East Eye earlier this year that his country was seeking to resume full ties with Ankara and once again exchange ambassadors.

Meanwhile, Turkish sources told Al-Monitor in May that Mossad head Yossi Cohen twice in the past 10 months met with his Turkish counterpart, MIT chief Hakan Fidan, to discuss regional problems from Syria to Libya.

Whatever their differences, Israel won't be looking to confront Turkey any time soon. As Israel's then-foreign minister Israel Katz said in December 2019, while Israel opposes Turkish involvement in Libya, "that doesn't mean we are sending battleships to confront Turkey".

Iran's Military Alliance with China Threatens Middle East Security

by Con Coughlin July 17, 2020

Announcing Iran's intention to build a new military base in the Indian Ocean, Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, the commander of the naval attachment of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), said that the base would be used to protect fishing and commercial vessels from piracy and "foreign ships", a reference to the US-led multinational naval task force that is currently protecting Gulf shipping from Iranian interference.

As part of the deal negotiated with Beijing, China is to be allowed access to a number of Iranian ports, including Chabahar, with the Chinese reported to be planning to build a new military base in the vicinity of the port.

The construction of such a base would enable the Chinese Navy to monitor the activities of the U.S. Navy in the area, in particular the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet in the Gulf, which is permanently deployed to protect shipping passing through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important economic waterways.

Any expansion in Iranian and Chinese military activity in the region would also have an impact on the jointly-administered U.S.-UK base on the island of Diego Garcia, one of the Pentagon's most important military assets in the region.

The prospect of a new Iran-China military alliance taking shape in the Indian Ocean is a development that will be taken with the utmost seriousness by the U.S. military, which is already concerned about Iran's attempts to spread its influence throughout the region. Pictured: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping on January 23, 2016 in Tehran. (Photo by STR/AFP via Getty Images)

The U.S. faces the prospect of a serious escalation in tensions with Iran after Tehran's announcement that it intends to build a new military base in the Indian Ocean by the end of the year.

The Iranian announcement, moreover, comes at a time when Tehran is on the point of signing a \$400 billion trade deal with China, which will include closer military cooperation between the two countries in the region in an attempt to counter Washington's traditional dominance.

Under the terms of the deal, details of which have been published in the New York Times, Iran could receive as much as \$400 billion in Chinese investment over the next quarter of a century.

The agreement, which a senior aide to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani says should be signed by March next year, also encompasses closer military cooperation between the two countries, including weapons development, combined training and intelligence sharing in order to combat "the lopsided battle with terrorism, drug and human trafficking and cross-border crimes."

As part of the new era of cooperation between Tehran and Beijing, concerns have been raised by Western security officials that this could lead to the two countries forming an alliance to bolster their presence in the Indian Ocean, thereby challenging America's long-standing dominance in the nearby Gulf region.

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Iran has so far given no indication as to where it intends to build its new base. At present Chabahar port in the Gulf of Oman, which is used, among other activities, for shipping goods to Afghanistan, is the nearest base Iran has to the Indian Ocean.

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Earlier this year Washington dispatched a fleet of B-52 bombers to Diego Garcia following the sharp rise in tensions with Tehran in the wake of the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, the IRGC commander who headed the elite Quds Force.

The prospect of a new Iran-China military alliance taking shape in the Indian Ocean is certainly a

development that will be taken with the utmost seriousness by the American military, which is already concerned about Iran's attempts to spread its influence throughout the region.

U.S. Marine Corps General Kenneth McKenzie, the commander of U.S. Central Command, warned in a recent interview that Iran posed the greatest threat to regional security and stability.

"Iran actively stokes instability and is intent on degrading security all over the region," McKenzie said. "They use proxies and violence to push other nations in the region to their agenda."

Any future military alliance between Tehran and Beijing would only strengthen Iran's determination to expand their malign activities in the region, thereby raising the prospect of a further escalation of tensions with the U.S. and its allies.

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