

# Isaiah 17 Countdown

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Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom (Matt. 24:7)  
"But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:8-10)

Here are a few developments I've selected from various news and intelligence sources to show how much worse conditions in the Middle East have gotten since Israel's war with Lebanon two months ago.

France and Italy have agreed to sell Lebanon their jointly developed Aster 15 anti-aircraft missile system to prevent Israeli unmanned surveillance aircraft from spying on military activities in Lebanon. (The UN has promised not to shoot down Israeli surveillance aircraft. But the French, who lead the UN forces, have threatened just the opposite.)

Russian intelligence personnel, protected by Russian infantry, have all but taken over the southern Lebanese town of Sidon near Israel's Northern border. The intelligence they gather will be shared with Syria and Iran. Sidon was at the northern extreme of the land given to the Tribe of Asher, and was yielded to the Phoenicians in violation of God's commandment. (Leviticus 25:23) Sidon's destruction is promised in Ezekiel 28:20-26. Russia is also constructing deepwater ports in Tartus and Latakia on Syria's coast to serve a major Russian Naval presence in the Mediterranean. The plan is to potentially relocate portions of Russia's Black Sea and North Sea fleets to the Middle East.

Syria and Iran have restored all of Hezbollah's pre-war offensive capabilities, and with the permission of the Lebanese Army and UN peacekeepers Hezbollah has regained control of its pre-war strongholds along Israel's northern border as well. By now it should be clear to everyone that the UN ceasefire has become a cruel joke. The parties involved (except for Israel) aren't just ignoring it, they actually seem to be trying to discover how blatant a violation is required to arouse the world's criticism. So far no one has said a word, and that includes Israel. It's a repeat of the Gaza withdrawal on a grander scale.

Syria is working with Hezbollah to topple the government of Lebanon in favor of one more friendly toward them, perhaps led by Hezbollah. Syria has

also maintained combat ready forces along its border with Lebanon and is openly discussing the merits of a pre-emptive attack on Israel. Iran has begun to upgrade the 7500 man Hamas militia into a Hezbollah like attack force with \$90 million worth of training and weaponry. Since the beginning of 2006, Hamas has smuggled over 20 tons of air and surface missiles, ordinance, and weaponry into Gaza through 15 recently discovered tunnels built since Egypt took control of the Southern border. Much of this armament has come from Iran. Syrian instructors arrived in Gaza for the first time last week to begin the training. The Iranian/Syrian goal is to have trained attack forces ready and waiting on both the northern and southern borders with Israel. Prelude to Ezekiel 38?

It appears that a coalition based on mutual interest has been formed between Iran, Russia, and Syria. They intend to exploit the weaknesses discovered in Israel's war with Lebanon by preparing a pre-emptive attack designed to prevent Israel from destroying Iran's Russian built nuclear capability should the need arise. In the UN, an agreement has been reached that will exempt Russia's reactor building program in any sanctions against Iran. This was done to get Russia's cooperation. Apparently Russia's 10 reactor deal with Iran will proceed unhampered.

From Moscow this week, Israeli PM Olmert warned again that, "We don't have the privilege to allow a situation in which Iran has the capability for unconventional weapons." (In reply Iranian Pres. Ahmadinejad declared, "There is no reason for Israel, the greatest insult to human dignity, to exist. It will soon disappear.") Despite these words of warning, experts say that Israel is so preoccupied with assessing the blame for its failure to neutralize Hezbollah that it's paying scant attention to gearing up for the next attack.

Meanwhile 3 US Navy Carrier Strike Groups have arrived for exercises off Iran's Persian Gulf Coast. The Iranian government believes their real purpose is to help Israel mount an attack against Iran. Ahmadinejad claims that Allah has told him that Iran will be successful in any military confrontation with Israel and the US. What Are You Trying To Say?

It doesn't take an inspired prophet of God to tell that things don't look good for Israel right now. In fact, aside from the times they've been in the middle of an all out war, I can't recall a worse time. Events seem to be gathering the type of momentum that leads to taking on a life on their own.

Like an atomic explosion that achieves critical mass and becomes unstoppable, they could soon spiral out of control. This time around it seems like Syria is getting set to assume the lead role on the battlefield with Iran calling the plays but remaining in the background. Remember, the idea is to prevent Israel from attacking Iran.

If Iran took the lead it would defeat the purpose of the strategy. Syria is a far different foe than Hezbollah, with 220,000 soldiers, 3,500 battle tanks, 600 combat aircraft and thousands of short and intermediate range missiles. 150-200 of these missiles are believed to have chemical or biological warheads. Israel's discovery that Syria was getting ready to launch one of these CBW's would likely trigger a pre-emptive strike of the kind mentioned in Isaiah 17. Israel would not only have to prevent Syria's actions but also demonstrate the consequences to any other country thinking of doing so. With such a build up of hostile intent all around, Israel has been deprived of any "measured response" option and will have to employ overwhelming force to any threat.

In August, Israel was criticized for making a disproportionate response to Hezbollah's cross border provocations. I wonder what the world will say when Damascus disappears under a mushroom shaped cloud. "All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, "Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you," declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. (Isaiah 41:11-14) You can almost hear the Footsteps of the Messiah. 10-21-06