

Prophetic Trends & Headline News

1. Where is the United States in Prophecy?

Military Maneuvers Reveal New Battle Strategies Against Iran

A series of apparently unconnected military movements observed in Middle East seas and skies in the last ten days have a common factor: introduction of the new US Air Sea Battle (ASB) doctrine, which is designed to make the most of tightly coordinated operations by air, land, sea, undersea, space and cyberspace capabilities for defeating those of the enemy.

Monday, May 14, the day that Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal warned Iran not to meddle in the evolving Saudi-Bahraini union, large US Navy and Marine forces put into Jeddah port for first time in 11 years.

Last week, Israel's Navy and Air Force and their special operations units - Shaldag, Shayetet 13 and 960 Task Force - carried out their largest combined exercise ever in the Mediterranean. It ended with Israeli surface ships and submarines arrayed in a dense defensive line against enemy vessels armed with unconventional weapons approaching the Israeli coast.

The Israeli exercise, which ended May 13, practiced the new American ABS doctrine of simultaneously massing large-scale sea and air strength against Iran on two seas, in this case, the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. It also drilled operating in unison with their American counterparts under the same doctrine.

DEBKAFfile's military sources report that Washington timed the unveiling of the new battle strategy for May 10, two weeks before the Six Power nuclear talks with Iran resume in Baghdad.

US Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jon Greenert explained that the ASB concept was developed "to defeat A2AD (Anti-Access/Area Denial) strategies such as the closure of the (Hormuz) strait, cyber attack, mines, cruise and ballistic missiles and air defense systems, threats enhanced by technological advancements."

Our military sources add: The concept is also closely applicable to American tactics for defending the Persian Gulf nations against possible Iranian aggression as the GCC takes its first unification steps to shore up its defenses against that threat.

Adm. Greenert wrote: "There's been attention recently about closing an international strait using, among other means, mines, fast boats, cruise missiles and mini-sub." "

DEBKAFfile: Those are precisely the systems Iran's Revolutionary Guards hold ready for a decision to block the strategic Strait of Hormuz to international oil traffic.

ABS concepts include "submarines hitting air defense and cruise missiles in support of Air Force bombers: F-22 Air Force stealth fighters taking out enemy cruise missile threats to Navy ships."

Adm. Greenert was the first senior American commander to put on public record the measures for repelling Iranian cruise missile attacks on US aircraft carriers deployed in the Persian Gulf. He also spelled out the mission for which a squadron of F-22 jets was stationed at the Al Dhafra air base in late April.

DEBKA-Net-Weekly 539 revealed on May 4 that a second squadron was due to land soon in the Gulf region.

On May 16, Adm. Greenert and US Air Force chief Gen. Norton Schwartz are to discuss the ABS in a public event at the Brookings Institute in Washington.

US and Israeli air, sea and special forces have meanwhile begun operating under the new doctrine in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Monday, the US Amphibious Ready Group, 24th MEU, led by the USS Iwo Jima put into Jeddah, the Saudi Navy's Red Sea command port, with 2,200 Marines aboard.

It was the first time since the 2001 Gulf War that the Saudis had permitted US naval and air units of this size to anchor in one of their ports and, moreover, allowed American military personnel to show themselves in its streets.

The GCC summit which began in Riyadh on the same day had three key items on its agenda: Iran's military, political and covert threat to the region's stability; the Syrian crisis; and unification steps between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain to ward off Iranian interference in the Shiite-led unrest.

Does Isaiah 9:10 Judgment Pattern Suggest Coming Calamity For US in September 2015?

If the world makes it through the end of the Mayan calendar this year, a pattern of recent economic disasters based on the Hebrew calendar portends what some suspect we will be the biggest U.S. financial calamity yet Sept. 13, 2015.

The No. 1 bestselling Christian book in America, "The Harbinger" by Jonathan Cahn, points out that the Americans two greatest financial shakings, occurred on successive Hebrew Shmitah years following the 9/11 Islamist terror attacks on the U.S., the key to the series of limited judgments the author sees as a result of America's turning away from God just as ancient Israel did before the dispersion.

While Cahn prefers not to speculate on what, if anything, might befall America on Sept. 13, 2015, it will be the next Shmitah year – which occurs on Elul 29 every seven years on the Hebrew calendar. It is a time when debts are to be forgiven and the land, in the agricultural communities of ancient Israel were to be given a rest.

Sept. 17, 2001, was the beginning of the economic calamity associated with 9/11 and the lowering of interest rates by the Fed resulting in the collapse of the stock market Sept. 17, 2001 – Elul 29 on the Hebrew calendar. Likewise, Sept. 29, 2008, marked the next big crash. Sept. 29, 2008, also fell on Elul 29.

All of this is laid out in a new documentary video called "The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment," the leading faith video in the nation and one of the top-selling documentaries of any kind, produced by Joseph Farah and WND Films.

Farah believes the date Sept. 13, 2015 bears close watching – though he is quick to admit he has no idea what, if anything, will happen in America.

“A clear pattern has been established,” he says. “I don’t believe it’s a coincidence what happened in America on Elul 29 in 2001 and 2008. It would be foolish to ignore the possibility that a greater judgment might be in the works – especially if America continues to move away from God and His Word.”

It’s also worth noting that Elul 29, 2015, represents the eve of the Feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashana at sundown. An unusual astronomical phenomenon, a blood red moon – or tetrad – is expected to occur that evening, according to NASA. The Feast of Trumpets begins a period known by Jews as “the days of awe” that lasts through Yom Kippur a week later.

Hebrew roots pastor Mark Biltz of El Shaddai Ministries in Washington state noted several years ago that a cluster of tetrads will occur in 2014 and 2015 – all of them on Hebrew high holidays. There won’t be any more for the rest of the 21st century.

Joel 2:31 says: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come.” Other biblical references can be found in Acts 2:20 and Revelation 6:12.

Whether or not anything significant occurs of a prophetic nature Sept. 13, 2015, Farah said he is immensely pleased with the documentary treatment of the message found in the best-selling book “The Harbinger” by Jonathan Cahn, which has remained on the New York Times bestsellers list for all of 2012.

“If you haven’t seen this movie yet, I urge you to get it, screen it with your family, show it to your friends and arrange church viewings,” said Farah. “This is the most important project I have been involved in through my 35-year media career. This is a message, I believe, God directed me to undertake for a time such as this.”

In January, “The Harbinger” by Cahn, a messianic rabbi from New Jersey, exploded onto the publishing scene, immediately becoming a surprise New York Times bestseller, already read by hundreds of thousands nationwide.

“A number of years ago, as I was standing at the edge of Ground Zero in New York City, I came across the first puzzle piece of an ancient biblical mystery and a prophetic message known as ‘The Harbinger’ that concerns the future of America,” explains Cahn, who helped write the two-hour documentary “The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment.”

Cahn says he has since found nine harbingers that tie the problems America has experienced beginning Sept. 11, 2001, to parallels that led to the destruction of ancient Israel.

“Before God judges a nation, He sends warning,” explains Cahn. “He sent warning to ancient Israel. He even allowed its enemies to breach its borders in a devastating strike that would traumatize the nation. It was a wake-up call, the call to return to God. But the nation responded with defiance. God then gave nine harbingers of judgment, nine prophetic signs, alarms and foreshadows of what was to come. Now America is the nation in rapid departure from God’s will. And God likewise allowed an enemy to breach its borders in a devastating strike – the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. It was,

likewise, a wake-up call. But America, like Israel, has not responded with repentance, but with defiance. And now the nine harbingers of judgment have reappeared and have done so on American soil.”

Isaiah 9:10 is a verse in which Israel’s national leaders utter a vow of defiance following an attack by Assyria. It declared that the nation would not repent before God but would defy Him instead. Cahn reveals in “The Harbinger” – and in even more dramatic fashion in the video – that beginning the day after Sept. 11, 2001, American leaders began repeating that 2,500-year-old vow, word for word.

“Having no idea what he was doing, the majority leader of the U.S. Senate (Tom Daschle) was declaring America as under the judgment of God,” Cahn says. “It was the reenactment of an ancient mystery – and bore the most grave of consequences.”

He continues: “According to the ancient mystery revealed in the Book of Isaiah, if after that first calamity and warning, the nation doesn’t return to God but responds in defiance, it will end up triggering a second calamity. It was because of this ancient key, that, seven years after 9/11, the American economy collapsed.

In the days after 9/11, the Federal Reserve slashed the base interest rate in an attempt to defy the consequences of the attacks. That action put us on the path leading to the collapse of the American economy seven years later. In 2008, the government made a second fatal mistake, another ill-fated financial decision, that would trigger the collapse of the American economy. Amazingly, it took place on the seventh anniversary of the uttering of the ancient vow on Capitol Hill.”

Cahn also reveals in “The Harbinger” and “The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment” something that readers and viewers universally find astonishing – that New York’s Ground Zero actually represents more than the former financial center of the country. It represents the exact place at which America was first consecrated to God in prayer by the country’s new leaders.

“When judgment came to Israel, the calamity returned the people’s attention to the place where the nation had been consecrated to God – the Temple Mount,” says Cahn.

“God was calling the nation back to Himself. What about 9/11? Could there be, in the American calamity, as well, a mystery of return? Could there be a prophetic message hidden in the place where it happened? There is a place where America was consecrated to God in prayer. It is also a place linked to a prophetic warning given on that same day – uttered by the nation’s first president – now coming to pass.”

In 1789, newly inaugurated President George Washington gave a prophetic warning at Federal Hall in New York City. He declared that America’s prosperity and protection were dependent upon its adherence to God.

Later, the political leaders of the young nation gathered at St. Paul’s Chapel to commit the nation’s future to God’s purposes. That chapel is located at Ground Zero and miraculously survived 9/11 virtually unscathed. But the foundation of Federal Hall was ominously cracked.

All of this is covered in “The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment,” using actual archival footage along with narration by Cahn.

“I had a chance to hear Jonathan Cahn’s message last fall,” said Farah. “Then I had an opportunity to

read an early manuscript of 'The Harbinger' before it was released in January. I was determined to produce this video documentary, 'The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment,' because I believe its message is the most important one for Americans at this moment in history. In fact, I believe this project may be the most important one of my life. That's how strongly I feel about it."

The video is directed by award-winning filmmaker George Escobar.

The key to decoding the harbingers, Cahn says, is found in understanding the seemingly innocuous words of Isaiah 9:10 (King James Version), what it meant to Israel and how the history seems to be repeating itself in America today: "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: The sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars."

These words were first uttered by leaders in Israel and in response to a limited strike by Assyria on the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali – an attack the prophet makes clear is actually part of a limited judgment by God against apostasy. It wasn't meant to destroy the nation, but to awaken it, according to most commentaries.

But, says Cahn, Israel didn't take the cue. Instead, the response from the people in Isaiah 9:10 is one of defiance. The brick buildings were toppled, but they vowed to build bigger and better. The little sycamore trees may have been uprooted, but they vowed to plant bigger and better cedars in their place.

God, speaking through Isaiah, explains what will happen as a result of their pride and arrogance and failure to heed the harbinger: Bigger and more potent attacks will follow.

Because neither the northern kingdom of Israel nor the southern kingdom of Judah truly repents, the first is eventually swept away by Assyrian invaders and the latter is carried off into captivity by the Babylonians for 70 years.

But what does this have to do with the United States of America – particularly what the U.S. experienced on 9/11 and since? Cahn has found some eerie parallels.

"In the aftermath of the attack, the nation was stunned," said Cahn. "Everyone was trying to make sense of what had happened – this unprecedented attack on America. The very next day, Sept. 12, then Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle presented America's response to the world. And what did he say?"

Daschle said: "America will emerge from this tragedy as we have emerged from all adversity – united and strong. Nothing ... nothing can replace the losses of those who have suffered. I know there is only the smallest measure of inspiration that can be taken from this devastation. But there is a passage in the Bible from Isaiah that speaks to all of us at times like this."

The majority leader then went on to read Isaiah 9:10.

"Daschle has no idea what he is doing here," explains Cahn. "He thinks he's offering comforting words to a grief-stricken people, but he is actually embracing the spiritually defiant and arrogant words of the children of Israel, proclaiming the ancient and ominous vow of the leaders of that nation. He doesn't realize it, but he is actually inviting more judgment on the nation."

It might be of some significance that Daschle, one of the most powerful men in the nation when he

spoke those words, later fell into disgrace – to the point where he couldn't even serve in Barack Obama's Cabinet.

That might have been the end of the story – if no other top leader in the nation uttered those strange and obscure words after 9/11. But that's not the case.

On the third anniversary of the attack, Sept. 11, 2004, another powerful U.S. senator running for vice president that year, and who would famously run for the presidency four years later, gave a speech to the Congressional Black Caucus.

This time, John Edwards' entire speech was built on a foundation of Isaiah 9:10.

"Today, on this day of remembrance and mourning, we have the Lord's Word to get us through," he said.

He then read Isaiah 9:10. He went on to talk about how America was doing just that – rebuilding with hewn stone and planting cedars.

In "The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment," viewers get to see these remarkable, largely forgotten or overlooked speeches, which directly link the events of 9/11 and the events referred to in Isaiah 9:10.

"Like Daschle, Edwards thinks he's invoking inspirational and comforting words from the Bible, but he's actually inviting judgment on America," says Cahn. "He's repeating the vow that provoked God to bring calamity on ancient Israel."

Even more astonishing, Daschle and Edwards were not alone among U.S. leaders in making similar statements, as "The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment" shows. Even Barack Obama's Inauguration Address in 2009 made similarly eerie allusions.

But aside from such statements, which could be chalked up to political talk and coincidences, is there anything else linking Isaiah 9:10 to 9/11?

The video documentary, like the book, is full of shocking parallels. There was actually a very famous sycamore tree felled in the attack on the World Trade Center. It was replaced by trees in the same genus as the cedar. There have been many plans made to rebuild the twin towers bigger and better and a large "hewn stone" was actually quarried out of the Adirondack Mountains in New York and brought to Ground Zero as a cornerstone.

"The parallels are truly stunning," says Farah, founder of WND, who produced the documentary for WND Films. "In fact, they are overwhelming in their number and their exactitude. I am persuaded God is trying to tell America something and Rabbi Cahn has found the key to unlocking the message."

Farah says events continue to unfold that seem to link directly to the message of Isaiah 9:10 right here in the United States.

In "The Harbinger" and "The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment," Cahn gives some remarkable answers to the following questions:

- Does a relatively obscure verse of Scripture hold the secret to the pain and suffering America has been experiencing in increasing doses since 9/11?
- Does Barack Obama play a role?

- Are America's key leaders unknowingly fulfilling a prophetic destiny of national judgment by uttering words from the Bible they don't comprehend?
- Is the United States following in the footsteps of ancient Israel with a spirit of defiance against God leading to increasingly severe judgments?
- Is America in danger of impending judgment? And is this judgment revealed in an ancient mystery that foretells current events down to the exact dates?
- What can Americans learn that can prevent their nation from falling like ancient Israel did when it failed to heed God's warnings?

The Isaiah 9:10 Judgment DVD is available from Prophecy News Watch at our donation page.

2. Israel - God's Timepiece

'Lost Tribe' Of Israel Returning Home

After a five-year immigration halt, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has given permission to a community of Indian citizens who believe they are one of the "lost tribes" of Israel to move to the Jewish state.

"We had a major breakthrough, and thank God, the Aliya [immigration to Israel] is set to resume this summer, and we hope and pray to bring the first batch of 50 families, or about 250-300 Bnei Menashe immigrants, to Israel by the end of August," said Michael Freund, chairman of Shavei Israel, which is behind the initiative.

Shavei, based in Jerusalem, hopes to bring to the Jewish state the remaining 7,000 Indian citizens who believe they are the Bnei Menashe, the descendants of Manasseh, one of biblical patriarch Joseph's two sons and a grandson of Jacob.

Already Freund's group helped facilitate the immigration of over 1,700 Bnei Menashe, with successive Israeli governments allowing and then halting the process. In 2007, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's administration put the kibosh on the process, which is now being reopened.

Shavei plans to bring 50 Bnei Menashe families to Israel this summer with hopes of transplanting the remaining tribe members from India to Israel in the next few years.

The original batches of Bnei Menashe to arrive here came as tourists in an agreement with Israel's Interior Ministry. Once in Israel, the Bnei Menashe converted officially to Judaism and became citizens.

But diplomatic wrangling halted the immigration process in 2003, with officials from some Israeli ministries refusing to grant the rest of the group still in India permission to travel here.

To smooth the process, Freund at the time enlisted the help of Israel's chief rabbinate, who flew to India in 2005 to convert members of the Bnei Menashe, a process stopped last year by India.

Freund then coordinated with the Israeli government the arrival of batches of a few hundred Bnei Menashe as tourists who would later convert, but that process was halted in July 2007.

Tribe members live in the two Indian states of Mizoram and Manipur, to which they say they were exiled from Israel more than 2,700 years ago by the Assyrian empire.

According to Bnei Menashe oral tradition, the tribe was exiled from Israel and pushed to the east, eventually settling in the border regions of China and India, where most remain today. Most kept customs similar to Jewish tradition, including observing Shabbat, keeping the laws of Kosher, practicing circumcision on the eighth day of a baby boy's life and observing laws of family purity.

In the 1950s, several thousand Bnei Menashe say they set out on foot to Israel but were quickly halted by Indian authorities. Undeterred, many began practicing Orthodox Judaism and pledged to make it to Israel. They now attend community centers in India established by Shavei Israel to teach the Bnei Menashe Jewish tradition and modern Hebrew.

Freund sees the Bnei Menashe immigration as biblical, quoting from Isaiah 43:5, which states, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west."

"Those words," Freund says, "are coming to life before our eyes."

"I think this is a very historic project," he added. "It is the closing of an historical circle. It is the return of a lost tribe of Israel after 27 centuries of exile, and it is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy."

Speculating On Why Israel Might Strike Iran In October

It's a foolish business, predicting when Israel might attack Iran's nuclear program. Get it wrong, as most people do, and you're left looking silly. And the only thing more foolish than a speculating pundit is the reader who believes him. As the Israeli saying goes, those who know don't talk and those who talk don't know.

Worse, even if your prediction is true to the current assessment of Israeli military planners, the timing of an operation is affected by factors that are not entirely in their control: the diplomatic and media environment, American preparations, Iranian countermeasures, Arab cooperation, the weather. Military strategy is not wedding planning. You don't set a date and work backwards. Even if you were right when you made the prediction, you might turn out to have been wrong by the time the predicted date rolls around.

So what kind of idiot would take the plunge and make such a prediction? My only defense is that I think it makes sense. I've never offered a prediction for an attack in the past, because no single date ever made overwhelming sense. It does now.

So, caveats aside, here it is: Israel is preparing to deploy military assets to disrupt Iran's nuclear program in October of 2012.

Consider the conditions.

The domestic situation is unusually stable, but only for the time being. On the one hand, the pundits are telling us, Netanyahu's coalition is stronger than ever. It just grew from 66 MKs to 94, or 78% of Israel's parliament.

But this narrative hides fragility. This coalition is about to consider very controversial legislation, including imposing national service on unwilling haredi and Arab populations, reforming the very

electoral system that brought the current crop of parliamentarians to power, weakening the High Court's oversight powers on other branches of government, passing a fiscally responsible and therefore politically unsatisfying 2013 budget, and more.

The legislative timing seems clear. Two of the most contentious issues will be resolved quickly due to High Court-ordered deadlines: the soon-to-expire Tal Law dealing with haredi military service, and the eviction of 30 Jewish families from private Palestinian land in Beit El. A 2013 budget must pass, and it's hard to see the current coalition partners breaking up the government over the budget. While the haredi enlistment issue might drive either the haredi parties Shas and UTJ (16 seats combined) or Israel Beitenu (15) from the government, neither side's withdrawal is a serious threat to the 94-seat coalition.

This brings us to the last weeks of 2012, when the agenda begins to unravel with complex and unpopular (among MKs) issues such as electoral reform. It is then that the coalition members will begin to feel the urge to distinguish themselves from their political fellow travelers ahead of the elections.

Kadima (with 28 seats) won't survive as a distinct party if it cannot explain, come election-time, why it is an alternative to the Likud. Party chairman Shaul Mofaz does not see himself serving as Netanyahu's loyal second-in-command forever, and already several up-and-coming Likud politicians and their party allies are agitating against a Kadima-Likud reunification that would push them down the party list. Mofaz initiated the new coalition deal as a way to give his own party, about to collapse to nine seats according to polls, time to rehabilitate its electoral prospects and rebuild its grassroots — not to rejoin the Likud.

This means that Mofaz will spend the next year looking for a plausible *casus belli* to rupture the coalition. Something big, something visceral, something that will drive the agenda of the elections. Something like a West Bank withdrawal or an electoral reform that would wipe out the smaller sectoral parties.

Israel Beitenu faces similar pressure to differentiate itself from the Likud, but for different reasons. It competes directly with the Likud for much of the same voter base. Even if it successfully pushes through its more aggressive version of national service enlistment for haredim, it will be looking for reasons to abandon the government in early 2013.

So yes, Netanyahu enjoys arguably the broadest and most stable coalition in Israeli history – roughly until the first quarter of 2013. Luckily, that domestic timing fits perfectly with the geopolitical window.

Diplomatically, the P5+1 group (made up of representatives from the US, Russia, China, France, Germany, and the UK) will meet in a couple weeks in Baghdad to launch a new round of discussions with the Iranians over their pursuit of nuclear arms. The talks aim at staving off a new round of sanctions set for July.

Israel cannot resort to military action while the entire Western world is committed to negotiating. If, however, nothing comes of new talks and sanctions by October, an assault becomes easier to explain.

Which brings us to the most important factor in the October timing of an Israeli strike: the November 2012 presidential elections in the United States. Netanyahu sees a moment of opportunity that will likely not be repeated for years to come. From late September to early November, White House

decision-making will be driven by President Obama's electoral needs — not his diplomatic policy. The mullahs are unloved in America, and many American pundits and politicians are on record supporting Israel's right to defend itself militarily against an Iranian threat. If Israel goes ahead with a strike, can Obama afford to be seen as trying to prevent it, effectively protecting the mullahs of Teheran in the process?

Israel might even hope that a credible Israeli threat of a strike just before the elections could lead to the best of all scenarios from Israel's perspective – an American strike. While the White House seems to imply at regular intervals that Israel should not expect this (Biden's recent advice to the Jews: "I would not contract out my security to anybody, even a loyal, loyal, loyal friend like the United States"), Obama is surely asking himself if he wouldn't rather control the confrontation than be dragged into it. If he can achieve meaningful results without incurring heavy losses in American blood or treasure, he would go into election day a wartime president.

To be clear, I'm not arguing this is going to happen. The recent public denunciations of Netanyahu by ex-Mossad chief Meir Dagan and ex-Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin suggest Israel is planning to go it alone. All I'm saying is that if there is any chance at all of an American strike, it's hard to think of a better moment for Netanyahu, and maybe also for Obama.

In the end, the logic is simple. Imagine for a moment that you are Benjamin Netanyahu. You believe the mullahs seek Israel's destruction and are convinced an Iranian nuclear bomb is an existential threat to the strong, but tiny, Jewish state. You enjoy a vast but temporary domestic political coalition. Abroad, the American president will never need you more than during a brief six-week period in the fall.

What would you do?

Iran Could Push Reluctant Hezbollah Into Regional War

In the event of a military altercation between Israel and Iran, the Islamic Republic could order Lebanon-based Hezbollah to strike Israel, a senior IDF official was quoted as saying in an AFP report on Tuesday.

Describing possible scenarios of renewed hostility between Israel and Hezbollah, the official characterized Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah as reluctant to enter into another conflict with the Jewish state but beholden to Iran, which provides much of Hezbollah's funding.

The official also expressed optimism that another conflict would be of a shorter duration than the 34-day altercation of 2006, which saw thousands of rockets rain on northern Israel and IDF strikes deep into Lebanese territory.

Last week, Nasrallah told supporters that Hezbollah could pinpoint and destroy every target in Israel.

Hezbollah is "capable of striking very specific targets not only in Tel Aviv but everywhere in occupied Palestine," he said, according to the Associated Press.

US Leads Major War Drill in Jordan – Israel Not Invited

The United States is leading what it described as the "largest military exercises in the Middle East in 10 years" in Jordan on Tuesday.

Eager Lion 2012 “is the largest exercise held in the region in the past ten years,” Major General Ken Tovo, head of the US Special Operations Forces, told reporters in Amman.

“Yesterday we began to apply the skills that we have developed over the last weeks in an irregular warfare scenario ... They will last for approximately the coming two weeks,” he added.

“The message that I want to send through this exercise is that we have developed the right partners throughout the region and across the world ... insuring that we have the ability to ... meet challenges that are coming to our nations,” Tovo said.

Over 12,000 soldiers are taking part in the war games, representing 19 countries, including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Qatar, Britain, France, Italy, Spain and Australia.

Jordanian army operations and training chief Major General Awni Adwan said the military exercise “has been in the planning phase for the past three years.”

“No forces will be deployed north ... the exercise is not connected to any real world event,” Adwan said when asked if the war games were related to the ongoing violence in Jordan’s northern neighbor Syria.

“This has nothing to do with Syria. We respect the sovereignty of Syria. There is no tension between the Syrians and us. Our objectives are clear,” Adwan said.

Israel – despite having extensive security agreements with Jordan – was not invited to participate in the exercises. Several Arab nations participating in the drill are still formally at war with the Jewish state.

Washington has granted Amman \$2.4 billion in military and economic aid in the past five years, according to official figures.

The Palestinian Authority is committed by previous agreements to halt incitement, and several key U.S. Congressmen have highlighted school text books that continue to encourage terrorism and the denial of Jewish rights to any part of Israel.

Israel Fears Nuclear Deal Between Iran, World Powers As Baghdad Talks Draw Near

Seven days before the opening of the next round of Iran nuclear talks, the pressure is on, as the media spins every trickle of information leaked about Iran. Troubled by a possible deal between Iran and the world powers, Israel views the talks, set to take place on May 23 in Baghdad, with some bitterness, perhaps even with hopes that they will fail completely.

The leak concerning the facilities for nuclear fuse testing at the Parchin military base, published by the Associated Press on Sunday, added to the tension surrounding negotiations on Iran’s nuclear program between the six powers – the U.S., Russia, China, France, Germany, Britain – and the Islamic Republic..

The interest behind leaking the information could belong to one of the powers who wishes to push Iran further into a corner and force the Islamic Republic into making more concessions in the negotiations.

Alternatively, the leak could benefit Israel, as Israel tries to make it clear to the world powers that only partial demands on Iran will not put a stop to the country's military nuclear program.

Added to all of the leaks of information about Parchin was a message from the Iranian opposition group, People's Mujahedin of Iran, which was issued over the weekend. The organization, which was first to uncover Iran's Natanz facility in 2002 and has connections with various western intelligence organizations, released a statement claiming that 60 Iranian nuclear scientists are working as part of a secret Iranian Defense Ministry unit, charged solely with the task of producing a nuclear bomb.

As the date of the Baghdad talks approaches, the feeling in Jerusalem is that Iran and the world powers are striving to reach a preliminary agreement concerning the nuclear program, which could forge a base for a permanent agreement between Iran, the U.S. and the other powers.

Wednesday's visit to Jerusalem by Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, which included a long meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and senior officials in his cabinet, only enhanced that feeling. Ashton, who led the negotiations on behalf of the six world powers, said to Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, and Vice Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz that she is not naïve about Iran's intentions.

When she returned to Brussels, however, Ashton told reporters that she hoped that the upcoming round of talks in Baghdad will be the "beginning of the end" of Iran's military nuclear program.

According to the evidence, Iran and the world powers are on their way to an "intermediate agreement." Such an agreement would allow Iran to enrich uranium to the high level of 20%, approaching the levels for a nuclear weapon. Iran however, would be forced to stop enriching the uranium at the underground, fortified facility at Fordo, near the city of Qom, as part of the agreement. Iran would also have to rid itself of 100 kilograms of enriched uranium already it already possesses.

In return, the world powers will suspend some of the sanctions already leveled on Iran. The EU oil embargoes as well as the American sanction against Iran's central bank are set to go into effect on July 1; however no further sanctions will be implemented. Iran will also receive a shipment of nuclear fuel rods to power its nuclear reactors.

The U.S. and the other powers explain that such an intermediate agreement would effectively halt Iranian progress toward a nuclear weapon, even if it will not completely solve the Iranian nuclear issue. Such an agreement will buy time for more talks, and tie Israel's hands in terms of carrying out a unilateral strike.

Israel completely rejects any kind of intermediate agreement. Up until this point, the Israeli position has not held even an inch of flexibility on the subject. Most likely, any outcome from the next round of talks, save for failure, will garner furious reactions from Jerusalem.

It was enough to listen to Ehud Barak's remarks this morning, to understand just how much Israel dreads such an agreement. "The powers must demand that any deal accepted by Iran will include a stop in progress on Iran's nuclear capability," said Barak in an interview with Army Radio.

"If the demands are expressed in the minimalistic manner which we suspect, Iran could agree to all of them, and still be able to continue progressing toward a nuclear weapon. In such a case these talks

will not help in stopping Iran," said Barak.

A few weeks ago, however, Barak demonstrated willingness to allow Iran to continue enriching Uranium at the low level of 3.5%. On Monday morning, Barak fell in line with Netanyahu, and pointed out that Israel made it clear to Ashton, the U.S., Germany, France, and Britain that the demand on Iran must be to stop all enrichment of uranium, not just enrichment to 20%.

"Enrichment to 3.5% must be stopped, and all uranium, or almost all uranium already enriched to 3.5% must be taken out of Iran, so that after the talks, Iran will not be able to continue toward its goal of a nuclear weapon," said Barak on Monday morning. "If less than those demands are made at the start, China and Russia will dilute them further... the result would be too little, and won't accomplish the goal, leaving the issue completely unresolved. I'm afraid that that's the situation," said Barak.

A senior Israel official involved in the Iran issue summed up the issue. "Israel's main concern is if the talks lead to the stop of Iran's nuclear program, or create a platform that buys Iran time, while eroding sanctions, said the official.

"As far as we know, there has been no strategic decision among Iranian leadership to change directions on the nuclear program. The recent positive statements made by Iran are meant to create an impression of moderation and a bolster relations with the world powers, but there is no real fundamental change in Teheran," continued the official.

3. A Revived Roman Empire?

Greeks Withdraw \$894 Million In A Day: Is This The Beginning Of A Run On Banks?

Political leaders in Athens were due to discuss an emergency government Wednesday to deal with a possible run on banks as it emerged Greeks withdrew almost \$900 million in a single day, fearing their country could crash out of the euro currency by the end of the week.

An interim government would take the country through to new elections on June 17, triggered by the collapse on Tuesday of talks to form a coalition between winners of the inconclusive May 6 election.

Greeks are withdrawing euros from banks, apparently afraid of the prospect of rapid devaluation if the country leaves the European single currency and returns to the drachma.

President Karolos Papoulias warned of "great fear that could develop into a panic," the minutes of Papoulias' negotiations with political leaders showed, according to Reuters.

The minutes also reveal Papoulias was warned by George Provopoulos, head of the country's central bank, that savers withdrew at least 700 million euros (\$894 million) on Monday, Reuters said.

"Withdrawals and outflows by 4:00 p.m. when I called him exceeded 600 million euros and reached 700 million euros," the president said according to the minutes of the meeting. "He expects total outflows of about 800 million euros."

Several banking sources told Reuters similar amounts had also been withdrawn on Tuesday.

Nevertheless, there was no sign of panic or queues at bank branches in Athens on Wednesday. Bankers dismissed suggestions that a bank run was looming. A senior executive at a large Greek bank told Reuters: "There is no bank run, no queues or panic. The situation is better than I expected. The amount of deposit withdrawals the president mentioned referred to three days, not one."

Still, some were taking no risks. Jenny P., an Athens private medical clinic receptionist originally from Ohio, told msnbc.com she had withdrawn 85 per cent of "what's left" in her bank account.

"We could have a new currency in a couple of days and nobody knows for sure what will happen," she said. "There are no lines to withdraw money, but maybe that's because many Greeks have precious little left in the bank. Many have been surviving on [€500] 400 euros a month, which has to cover tax, bills, food and medical costs."

She said she was planning to return to the United States amid the economic turmoil which has left her Greek husband unemployed. "It is hard to see what the future will be here," she said.

Greeks have already been withdrawing their savings from banks at a sharp clip - nearly a third of bank deposits were withdrawn between January 2010 and March 2012, reducing total Greek household and business deposits to 165 billion euros.

A senior bank executive said there had been withdrawals in recent days but there was no sign yet of a panic, as had happened in April 2010 when eight billion euros were withdrawn just before Greece obtained its first foreign bailout.

The likelihood of a Greek exit from the euro – dubbed the "Grexit" by commentators – is now so high that even political leaders committed to avoid it admit preparations are under way.

Asked in an interview whether Greece could leave the euro zone, IMF director Christine Lagarde replied: "We certainly don't hope so, from the IMF point of view ... but we have to be technically prepared for anything".

Will there be a run on Greek banks?

A Twitter image shared by economics blogger Tyler Durden, posted on UK website Zero Hedge, showed what appeared to be lines outside ATMs in Greece, although it was impossible to verify where the picture was taken or if lines were longer than normal.

Reuters reported early Wednesday that there has "so far been no sign" of lines at banks in Athens, despite the likelihood that an exit from the euro would see a dramatic devaluation in of Greek currency.

CNBC's John Carney raised the prospect of reduced limits on ATM withdrawals, citing a calculation by London analysts Capital Economics that if every working-age Greek withdrew the maximum permitted ATM amount of 300 euros a day, every single deposit of Greek households would be gone within 61 days.

"So the controls put in place in advance of an exit from the euro would have to include not only limits on moving funds abroad, but limiting withdrawals from ATMs and possibly declaring a bank holiday," Carney wrote.

In practice, however, any Greeks lucky enough to possess any savings have already taken the precaution of withdrawing them from banks.

“Over the last two years Greeks withdrew approximately 70 billion euros from their bank accounts, an amount equivalent to approximately 35 percent of Greek GDP,” Dr Michael Arghyrou, senior economics lecturer at Cardiff Business School in Wales told msnbc.com.

“This is a negative demand shock of enormous proportions and with increased uncertainty this trend will almost certainly accelerate. So yes, we will almost certainly see more deposits withdrawals over the next few days, I just hope is that they will not be so large as to lead to a full-blown bank run.”

How likely is ‘Grexit’? Are drachma notes being printed?

A year ago, it was nearly impossible to get officials and political leaders to talk about the possibility of Greece leaving the eurozone. Now it appears to be an open secret.

Ireland's central bank chief and European Central Bank policymaker, Patrick Honohan, signaled on Sunday that a Greek exit might not be as painful as previously thought.

"Technically, it can be managed," he told reporters. "It would be a knock to the confidence for the euro area as a whole ... It is not necessarily fatal, but it is not attractive."

The tone from the European Commission, the EU's executive, has shifted too.

On Monday, spokeswoman Pia Ahrenhilde-Hansen said: “We wish Greece will remain in the euro and we hope Greece will remain in the euro ... but it must respect its commitments. Greece has its future in its own hands and it is really up to Greece to see what the response should be.”

Asked about contingencies, she did not rule them out.

Reuters quoted one European Commission official saying: "Clearly, the future of Greece is in the Eurozone. We are working on that. The 16 other governments in the Eurozone really are at the end of their patience with Greece. There isn't room or any willingness to move. The decisions are really in Athens' hands. But it doesn't look good."

However, the official response remains that a Greek exit is not being considered.

In an interview with NBC News on Wednesday, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, said: "I have the will, the determination, to keep Greece in the Eurozone. I think it will be good for Greece and good for all of us. We want Greece to stay in the Eurozone."

Some commentators have pointed to a 13 percent rise in the share value of British firm De La Rue, which is the world's largest currency printer, amid speculation it is best placed to pick up the contract for issuing new versions of the drachma, the Greek currency phased out in 2002.

It has remained tight-lipped on whether it is working for the Greek government, but in the meantime an interim solution has been mooted in which existing euro notes would be converted into drachmas by being endorsed with an official stamp.

Would a 'Grexit' be so bad? If so, what are the alternatives?

Lagarde said a Greek exit from the Eurozone would “have consequences on growth... consequences on trade and...consequences on financial markets “. She added: “You can certainly assume it would be quite messy.”

Global financial institutions have a \$536 billion exposure to Greek debt, according to the latest figures from the International Monetary Fund, although almost all is borne by France, Germany and other key European economies.

The Institute of International Finance has estimated that the global cost of a Greek exit could hit \$1.2 trillion, according to the Daily Telegraph in London. When Argentina defaulted in 2001, foreign debtors lost around 70 percent of their investments, it said.

The Telegraph said a report in Germany’s *Wirtschaft Woche* magazine forecast that a Grexit would cost the Eurozone governments alone \$300 billion, pushing the whole European economy – which narrowly avoided entering recession on Tuesday by recording exactly zero quarterly growth - into a crisis not seen since the 1930s.

Many are looking at the possibility that Athens issues IOUs to meet salaries and key service bills for a fixed period, much in the way California did during its budget crunch in 2009 when it issued 'registered warrants' with a coupon in place of dollar salaries and which banks then accepted for cash.

Much hinges on whether the European Central Bank would allow the Greek central bank to accept such IOUs and there's little clarity on those hypotheticals.

However, strategists believe any Greek government IOUs would quickly act as a proxy for a new drachma and exchange values against the euro would mostly likely plummet in practice as people rushed to cash out - offering Greeks a glimpse of the shock of devaluation in a euro-ised economy with euro-denominated debts.

"I'm really not sure Greece could survive for very long if external money was cut off," said Darren Williams, economist at fund manager AllianceBernstein. "But what an experience of IOUs may do rather quickly is bring home to the average Greek citizen just how much more difficult a place it is outside the bailout programme and outside the euro."

What would happen to the euro?

Besides the huge liabilities, there is the risk that a Greek exit from the euro would set a precedent for the possible exit of other weakened economies including Spain and Portugal.

"Opening up the Pandora's box of exit means deposit risk across the periphery," an RBS analyst told Reuters.

Jan Randolph, head of sovereign risk, IHS Global Insight, told the BBC: “It would be difficult for the [European Central Bank] to keep banks afloat. The Greek banking sector would collapse as well. What happens next is a political question. European nations would probably not accept another Western European country descending into chaos and collapse.”

What is the political future for Greece?

Rampant inflation, civil unrest and even a return to dictatorship could be on the cards, analysts warn.

Arghyrou told msnbc.com: "There will be no credit for Greek banks or the Greek state. That could mean a shortage of basic commodities, like oil or medicine or even foodstuffs.

The country would end up in a volatile period. There would be institutional weakness. The worst case scenario would be a social and economic breakdown, perhaps even leading to a totalitarian regime."

Henry Wilkinson, head of analysis at the Risk Advisory Group, said: "We are entering into unknown territory and it remains profoundly unclear what actually will happen. I wouldn't overstate it, but I think the big concern out of all of this is that in times of great uncertainty and hardship, more extreme parties tend to find greater resonance with their message."

Roger White, an American private tutor who moved back to the United States from Greece three weeks ago to escape the economic crisis, told msnbc.com: "I see violence on the Greek horizon. Will the Greeks continue to withdraw their savings? Yes, for as long as they can. Then, the government will intervene with limits on withdrawals and other controls.

Then, Greeks will protest in the streets, light banks afire, smash bank windows and rip out ATMs.

"Oddly, I can say that in many ways my Greek experience gave me wonderful opportunities.

Nonetheless, my epiphany came when Greece's economic collapse and the government's implosion revealed just how reliant on the government we are, and just how vulnerable to government mismanagement we are."

4. The Gog/Magog War

Iran Drills First Large-Scale Paratroop Drops For Offensive Action

Special operations units of the Iranian army and Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) Tuesday, May 14, began a two-day practice of offensive tactics, for the first time dropping large-scale forces from the air deep behind enemy lines.

The many war games Iran has conducted until now focused on defenses of strategic and nuclear locations and repelling invaders. This drill displayed its aggressive capabilities.

Codenamed Ja'far Tayyar, it was staged in remote Khorasan near the Afghan border, so as not to expose the commando tactics it employed.

In announcing the exercise, Gholam-Ali Gholamian, Dep. Commander for Operations for the IRGC Ground Forces, cagily called it another routine exercise for "maintaining the preparedness and promoting the combat capability of units stationed in the region."

DEBKAfile's military sources disclose that there was nothing routine about it. The units taking part were not stationed in the region but flown in especially.

Western intelligence sources observing the exercise report that its offensive nature was evident: Air transports coming in from the rest of the country dropped large numbers of paratroopers and special forces; Air Force fighter-bombers practiced intense bombardments of small targeted locations; and helicopters drilled rapid transfers of forces between points and air cover for the units reaching the ground.

Monday, the Persian Gulf rulers invited to Riyadh by Saudi King Abdullah for a summit on the Iranian threat dwelt long and hard on the exercise and concluded the threat had been exacerbated and that Tehran had more in store for them than closing the Strait of Hormuz to oil traffic in the event of war.

They saw special forces being prepared by Iran to strike deep inside their countries up to and including their oil-producing regions.

The exercise also served the ongoing trade of war signals between Washington and Tehran. Staging a special forces exercise not far from the US military presence in Afghanistan was meant as a rejoinder to US-led special forces maneuver taking place in Jordan across the border with Syria with the participation of 17 nations.

Iranian and Syrian media made much of the fact that the US-led war game was named Eager Lion 12 as a deliberate insult to Bashar Assad, whose name is the Arabic for Lion.

5. Apostate Christianity

50+ Staff Resign From Christian University After Refusing To Sign Homosexuality Pledge

Last October, news broke that Shorter University, a Christian college in Rome, Georgia, had decided to ask its employees to sign a controversial pledge that affirms that they are not engaging in homosexuality, among other forbidden activities. Now, after scores of employees refused to sign the document, the college, which is affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention, has reportedly received a massive number of resignations.

Rather than renewing their contracts with the private school, around 50 staffers (the NY Daily News reports that the number is closer to 60) refused to sign the "Personal Lifestyle Statement," and simply decided to throw in the towel. The Christian Post has more:

Dr. J. Robert White, executive director of the Georgia Baptist Convention, which Shorter is a part of, told The Christian Post that the "lifestyle statement" is consistent with the convention's position. "We have not taken a specific position related to the 'lifestyle statement,'" said White, "but the history of our convention, which goes back to 1822, has approved many resolutions regarding homosexuality as a sin and alcohol use as ill-advised."

Despite the outcry from some faculty and staff regarding the statement, White did not believe the measure would be overturned.

"I do not believe there will be any changes in the 'lifestyle statement' due to people who are opposed to it," said White. "I think that at any educational institution the faculty and the administration are responsible for following the guidelines set by the board of trustees who provide this whole governance for the university."

Plainly stated: the opposition to the regulatory mechanism isn't likely to lead Shorter University to reverse course. Aside from forbidding an active role in a gay relationship, the lifestyle pledge also bans pre-marital sex, adultery and drug use and abuse. Additionally, employees are asked to be active members of a church and to live their lives as committed, Bible-believing followers of Jesus Christ.

"Shorter University will hire persons who are committed Bible believing Christians, who are dedicated to integrating biblical faith in their classes and who are in agreement with the University Statement of Faith," the document reads. "Moreover, employees are expected to be active members of a local church."

Michael Wilson, a tenured librarian who has worked at the school for 14 years, had originally planned to stay until retirement. Now, in light of the statement's enforcement, he has handed in his resignation. Wilson, who is gay, naturally refused to sign the document, calling his choice "a matter of conscience."

In October, university president Don Dowless defended the new policy, while claiming that the higher educational facility can both discriminate in its hiring practices and make specific requirements of employees.

"We have a right to hire only Christians," he said. "I think that anybody who adheres to a lifestyle that is outside of what the biblical mandate is and of what the board has passed, including the president, would not be allowed to continue here."

For now, it seems Shorter University is digging its heels into its decision and will likely be in need of quite a number of new staffers. In responding to the latest news of mass departures, Dowless says that the university wishes those who choose to leave well.

6. The Rise of Islam

Making Chechnya "More Islamic Than The Islamists"

Chechnya's government is openly approving of families that kill female relatives who violate their sense of honor, as this Russian republic embraces a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam after decades of religious suppression under Soviet rule.

In the past five years, the bodies of dozens of young Chechen women have been found dumped in woods, abandoned in alleys and left along roads in the capital, Grozny, and neighboring villages.

Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov publicly announced that the dead women had "loose morals" and were rightfully shot by male relatives. He went on to describe women as the property of their husbands, and said their main role is to bear children.

"If a woman runs around and if a man runs around with her, both of them should be killed," said Mr. Kadyrov, who often has stated his goal of making Chechnya "more Islamic than the Islamists."

In today's Chechnya, alcohol is all but banned, Islamic dress codes are enforced and polygamous

marriages are supported by the government.

Some observers say Mr. Kadyrov's attempt to impose Islamic law violates the Russian Constitution, which guarantees equal rights for women and a separation of church and state.

"We are a traditional, conservative society, but the government has gone overboard," said Lipkhan Bazaeva, head of the Women's Dignity Center, a nongovernmental organization promoting women's rights in Grozny. "They are declaring unacceptable limits on women — as an individual, she has no rights even if her husband beats her, despite Russian laws."

Though observers agree that honor killings are on the rise in Chechnya, the issue remains largely taboo among locals — making official statistics hard to come by.

"You hear about these cases almost every day," said a local human rights defender, who asked that her name not be used out of fear for her safety. "It is hard for me to investigate this topic, yet I worked on it with [human rights activist] Natasha [Estemirova] for a while. But, I can't anymore. I am too scared now. I've almost given up, really."

Estemirova, who angered Chechen authorities with reports of torture, abductions and extrajudicial killings, was found in the woods in 2009 in the neighboring region of Ingushetia with gunshot wounds to the head and chest. Her killer or killers have not been found.

Few dare to openly challenge Mr. Kadyrov's rule. But activists say some young Muslim women do so surreptitiously, placing themselves in a constant tug of war between two value systems.

In this small Chechen village, residents talk about the teenage girl who was killed in early February after she spent a night at her boyfriend's house.

The 16-year-old's body was wrapped in a traditional rug and returned to her mother's house. Her relatives are suspected of killing her in the name of family honor.

To escape the strict mores, some of the young opt for early marriage, which they view as the gateway to independence, sexual activity and societal respect. That goes for young Chechen men, also.

Abu-Khadzh Idrisov, 20, married in his teens to simply experiment, he said. His first marriage at age 14 lasted barely a year. He married a second time at 18. He spotted his future wife at a park in Grozny and, with the help of his friends, kidnapped her.

"When I married her, I honestly knew only two things: her name and the school she studied at. We talked together once," he recalled. "But we have traditions and extremely strict rules in Chechnya, and you can't just ignore them. I carry my family's name, and if I tarnish it, I will have problems."

Huge Numbers Think Islam In Conflict With The West

A series of polls released over the last few weeks shows most Americans believe a global conflict is raging between Islam and the West.

Specifically, Rasmussen Reports polls found that 63 percent of likely U.S. voters believe a battle is brewing, while only 18 percent deny the divide.

Furthermore, when asked about many Western nations' support of the populist uprisings known as "the Arab Spring," only 26 percent of voters think the United States should do more to encourage the growth of democracy in the Islamic world, while 58 percent say the United States should leave things alone.

The numbers became even more significant when separating mainstream U.S. voters from a group Rasmussen calls the "political class."

For example, Rasmussen found that 73 percent of mainstream U.S. voters believe there is a conflict in the world between Western civilization and Islamic nations, and a plurality (49 percent) believe most of the world's Muslims view America as an enemy.

But only half of Rasmussen's "political class" acknowledges a global conflict, and 62 percent reject the idea that Muslims view the U.S. as an enemy.

Similarly, 61 percent of mainstream voters suspect a terrorist attack in the U.S. in the next year is likely, while 70 percent of the political class see little or no chance of such an attack.

Rasmussen found that taken as a whole, however, only 11 percent of likely U.S. voters think the war on terror is over, while 79 percent say that war, declared after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America, is still ongoing.

Rasmussen explains it defines "political class" as the subset of Americans whose answers to poll questions reveal they look primarily to governing elite – rather than the American people – to best rule the nation.

The "political class," therefore, isn't actually composed of D.C. and Wall Street insiders, but Rasmussen explains, "Experience has shown that political class voters share the views and attitudes of the elites they support. ... In many cases, the gap between the mainstream view and the political class is larger than the gap between mainstream Republicans and Democrats."

Furthermore, Rasmussen says, "In the clique that revolves around Washington, D.C., and Wall Street ... some see self-governance as little more than allowing voters to choose which of two politicians will rule over them. Others in that elite environment are even more brazen and see self-governance as a problem to be overcome."

The polling firm states that when leaners are included, 91 percent of Republicans, 72 percent of Democrats and 87 percent of unaffiliated voters fall into the "mainstream" category; the rest – a total of nine percent of all voters – fall into the "political class."

On the issue of international Islamic relations, Rasmussen found 80 percent of Republicans and 62 percent of unaffiliated believe there is a global conflict today between Western civilization and the Islamic world. Just 46 percent of Democrats agreed.

There's little partisan disagreement, however, when it comes to what the United States should do about it, Rasmussen found: Majorities of all three groups say America should stop fueling the Arab Spring that has already toppled several more secular governments in the Muslim world.

7. Increase in Knowledge/New Technologies

Big Brother Street Lights Capable of Recording Conversations, Talking To People Coming To A City Near You

Talking surveillance cameras that bark orders at passers-by and can also record conversations are heading for U.S. streets, with manufacturer Illuminating Concepts announcing the progress of its 'Intellistreets' system.

As we first reported last year, high tech street lights with "homeland security applications" are now being installed in major U.S. cities.

The street lights also have loudspeakers that can give audible warnings to individuals, mimicking the talking surveillance cameras in the UK that shout out orders through microphones telling people to pick up litter or leave the area.

A recent press release put out by Amerlux announces the company's partnership with Illuminating Concepts to further advance the rollout of 'Intellistreets'.

The announcement confirms that the street lights will have a number of "homeland security features" including a loudspeaker system that will be used to "engage captive audiences".

"The built-in speaker can broadcast emergency information," states the press release, adding, "SmartSite luminaires can be equipped with a variety of cameras and sensors to ensure real-time 24/7-security coverage.

The sensors detect a variety of threats that enable rapid response from emergency personnel or help prevent crime and gain control of the streets."

The press release adds that the SmartSite system developed to operate the 'Intellistreets' surveillance hubs is intended not only for street lighting but also for "retail malls, sports venues, on college campuses, and in new construction," and "might well become commonplace" in the near future.

Not only can the street lights, now being rolled out in Detroit, Chicago and Pittsburgh with Department of Energy backing, act as surveillance cameras, Minority Report-style advertising hubs, and Homeland Security alert systems, they are "also capable of recording conversations," according to a report by ABC 7.

The ABC video clip, featured at the end of this article, includes creepy footage of the street lights being used to transmit Orwellian security alerts, including "pay attention please....please stand by for a public safety announcement," and "this is a security alert".

Illuminating Concepts responded to the controversy over 'Intellistreets' last year by ludicrously claiming the system did not represent a "big brother" intrusion, as if talking surveillance cameras that also record private conversations are a perfectly normal concept.

The company also denied that it had received funding from the Department of Homeland Security yet subsequent reports confirmed that owner Ron Harwood is now "working with Homeland Security" to implement the high tech network, which is connected via a ubiquitous wi-fi system.

In reality, the system represents Big Brother on steroids – George Orwell’s worst nightmare come to life with interconnected wireless ‘telescreens’ blanketing America, all in the name of safety and security.

Feds Clearing The Way For Drones Over Your House

The federal government is moving quickly to open the skies over America to drones – both for commercial and government purposes – and respected Washington Post and Fox News commentator Charles Krauthammer is forecasting “rifles aimed at the sky all across America.”

The comments from Krauthammer, who won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 1987 after serving as a speechwriter for Vice President Walter Mondale and then beginning his journalism career at The New Republic, were on “Special Report” with Bret Baier.

“I would predict, I’m not encouraging, but I predict the first guy who uses a Second Amendment weapon to bring a drone down that’s been hovering over his house is going to be a folk hero in this country,” Krauthammer said.

The conversation arose as the federal government announced it is beginning to allow public safety agencies to fly unmanned aircraft – drones – with fewer and fewer restrictions.

According to yesterday’s report from Bloomberg, police, fire and other government agencies now are being allowed to fly drones weighing as much as 25 pounds without special approvals previously needed.

The Federal Aviation Administration said on its website that the move was an interim step until the agency finishes rules that will open the door for commercial operation of drones, as well as those uses for government purposes.

Congress has adopted the position of encouraging more drone flights, with the “goal of adapting technology used by the military in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The FAA said it had gotten requests from 61 police departments, agencies or universities to fly drones, including the Army, Air Force, Navy and others.

The move toward drones, which will offer virtually unlimited spy options to watch U.S. citizens, has raised all sorts of privacy concerns, about which Krauthammer expressed an unreserved horror.

“I’m going to go hard left on you here. I’m going to go ACLU. I don’t want regulations. I don’t want restrictions – I want a ban on this. Drones are instruments of war. The Founders had a great aversion to any instruments of war, the use of the military inside of the United States. They didn’t like standing armies, It has all kinds of statutes against using the Army in the country.

“A drone is a high-tech version of an old Army and a musket. It ought to be used in Somalia to hunt bad guys, but not in America. I don’t want to see it hovering over anybody’s home.”

His said there’s a difference from other technology applications.

“Yes, you can say we have satellites, we’ve got Google Street. And London has a camera on every

street corner. But that is not an excuse to cave in on everything else and accept a society where you are always under – being watched by the government. This is not what we want. I would say ban it under all circumstances.

“And I would predict, I’m not encouraging, but I predict the first guy who uses a Second Amendment weapon to bring a drone down that’s been hovering over his house is going to be a folk hero in this country.”

On the panel too was Mara Liasson, of National Public Radio.

“I don’t know if you can do that. Aren’t they awfully high up?”

No problem, Krauthammer suggested.

“You may have to use a lot of them. You may have to use a very high powered one. You may have to use a bazooka. I’m not encouraging. I’m simply making a prediction.”

Baier pointed out that a drone already has been used in a criminal investigation in America, with the case of a North Dakota man arrested for activities observed with a drone.

Krauthammer was allowing no compromises.

“I don’t think we want a society where if there are these objects hovering over, streaming real-time information about you, your family, your car, your location. We know it’s going to be abused. Yes, you say sure, we’re going to start restricting here, so we can save maybe \$80,000. It’s not worth it.”

“Stop it here, stop it now,” he said.

He said otherwise, there would be “rifles aimed at the sky all across America.”

Also raising concerns is the Electronic Privacy Information Center, which has told the Federal Aviation Administration there needs to be transparency and accountability in drone operations.

The organization has recommended the development of privacy protections before drones are used widely in the nation’s airspaces.

EPIC said it was part of a coalition of more than 100 organizations, experts and others who petitioned the FAA to conduct a formal rulemaking procedure on the privacy implications of domestic drone use.

KUSA-TV: Mystery object nearly causes mid-air collision over Denver

Several members of Congress also have expressed to the FAA their concerns over the privacy implications of drone use. In a letter to the FAA, the congressmen said, “There is ... potential for drone technology to enable invasive and pervasive surveillance without adequate privacy protections.”

EPIC noted that because of their design and technology, drone surveillance “often occurs without the knowledge of the individual being monitored.”

“These vehicles can gather detailed information on individuals,” the organization reports.

The federal government already has issued 78 certificates for commercial drone operations, along with 273 active government licenses.

Among the specifics: "The Miami-Dade Police Department in Florida used federal grant money to purchase a small drone vehicle. Reports dating back to 2008 explain that Miami was seeking to use a small drone ... 'to gather real time information in situations which may be too dangerous for officers.' However, police have admitted that the drone can be used to look into houses," EPIC reported.

EPIC documented that "the increased use of drones poses an ongoing threat to every person residing with the United States. Companies are developing 'paparazzi drones' in order to follow and photograph celebrities. Private detectives are starting to use drones to track their targets. Google, Inc., has deployed street-level drones in other countries to supplement the images of Street View. Criminals and others may use drones for purposes of stalking and harassment."

The organization warned, "The consequences of increased government surveillance through the use of drones are even more troubling. The ability to link facial recognition capabilities on drone cameras to the FBI's Next Generation Identification database or DHS' IDENT database, two of the largest collections of biometric data in the world, increase the First Amendment risks for would-be political dissidents. In addition, the use of drones implicates significant Fourth Amendment interests and well established common law privacy rights."

The units, EPIC documents, can peer "inside high-level windows, and through solid barriers, such as fences, trees, and even walls."

Gadgets That Will Work Under Your Skin – But Are You ready?

Left your phone at home again? A solution is at hand: make sure it is with you at all times by having it implanted in your arm.

But given the opportunity, would you want your gadget to be a permanent part of you? The question may need answering sooner than you think.

Researchers at Autodesk, a software company in Toronto, Canada, checked to see whether the methods we currently use to interface with our gadgets work when the device is implanted in human tissue. The answer was a resounding "yes".

A button, an LED and a touch sensor all functioned appropriately when embedded under the skin of a cadaver's arm. The team was even able to communicate transcutaneously using a Bluetooth connection and charge the electronics wirelessly.

"That's the bottom line," says Christian Holz of the Autodesk team, who presented the work this week at the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems in Austin, Texas. "Traditional user interfaces work through the skin."

Would anyone want a piece of consumer electronics inside their body? There is something intrinsically creepy about the idea. Plus there is a risk that the device could malfunction and need to be removed, or that it could infect the surrounding tissue, not to mention the dystopian vision of a society in which our phones become tracking devices that we can never be free of.

Yet there are reasons for thinking that the cyborg future will come to be. The team, who worked with University of Toronto anatomist Anne Agur, says that medical risks such as infection need to be better understood before a device can be implanted into a living person. But it is a problem that manufacturers of existing implants, such as stents and replacement hips, have successfully tackled.

There are also clear benefits to implanted electronics. "The device is always there," says Holz. "You cannot lose it." And implants provide new interface methods. A gadget similar to a smartphone could provide a calendar alert by means of a gentle sub-skin vibration, for example.

And that creepy feeling? It is a common reaction now, but may lessen as people become familiar with the technology. The idea of using a machine to assist a human heart was once deemed unnatural, for example, but the insertion of a pacemaker is now a routine procedure.

"In general, the trend has been that people are more and more willing to incorporate bits of the machine world into themselves," says Sherry Turkle, a sociologist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"The perception [of this technology] 10 years ago would differ from today and from what we would get in 10 years' time," agrees Holz.

Turkle wants society to think seriously about the potential downsides of implanted electronics, including tracking. But she has also studied how people relate to their cellphones and notes that some talk about them as if they were cyborgs.

"People literally cannot be without this device," Turkle says. "They don't feel the same when they are not connected. We live with our phones as if they are part of our body."

If we feel that way, perhaps having a phone implanted isn't unnatural at all. It may just be the obvious thing to do with a device that we already feel highly attached to.

8. Christian Worldview/Issues

How to Answer Arguments In Favor Of Abortion

Imagine it's your first night hosting a national call-in counseling broadcast. The program is live, your calls aren't screened and no topic is taboo. The theme music plays ... the producer counts down the seconds ... "three, two, one, you're on!" Then, you hear these exact words:

"I was attacked two months ago, and I am pregnant through rape."

So began my first "Hope in the Night" radio broadcast in 1996. "What are you thinking about doing in regard to this child?" I asked the young caller named Sarah, who revealed she'd already visited a clinic. "I was thinking about having an abortion," she replied.

I expressed sincere sorrow over Sarah's situation and gently probed for more information. Sensing her conflict about abortion, we began discussing common arguments and answers, such as:

The Morality of Abortion

• Argument: "Abortion is not morally wrong."

Answer: Since human life begins at conception, then abortion by choice becomes premeditated murder. Exodus 20:13 says, "You shall not murder."

The Status of a Fetus

• Argument: "A fetus should not be regarded as a baby."

Answer: A fetus is not a mass of tissue. God's Word does not distinguish between a "potential baby" and a "newborn baby." In the Bible, the same Greek word *brephos*, is used to describe . . .

- a fetus. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb" (Luke 1:41).
- babies. "People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them" (Luke 18:15).

The Reproductive Rights of Women

• Argument: "Every woman should have the right to control her own body."

Answer: Yes, she should, but in pregnancy there are . . .

- 2 different bodies
- 2 different heartbeats
- 2 different brain wave patterns
- 2 different genetic codes (DNA)
- often 2 different blood types
- often 2 different sexes

A woman should have the right to control her own body, but a woman should not have control over ending another's life. First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

The Viability Factor

• Argument: "Abortion is permissible when a fetus is not 'viable.' A fetus that is incapable of sustaining life outside the womb is not a viable person and does not deserve protection from society."

Answer: To define viability as a person's ability to survive without assistance is dangerous because a person's viability can be lost as a result of age, illness or serious injury. A 3-month-old girl cannot sustain life on her own. Nor can a 60-year-old man who is dependent on a respirator.

But do their situations negate the personhood of these people? No! Should these persons be candidates for destruction? No! Those who insist on a viability standard remove protection from those who need it the most. The viability factor is not a valid argument. Deuteronomy 30:19-20 says, "I have set before you life and death. ... Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."

Biblical truth, delivered compassionately, can help an abortion-minded woman change her course, as can other critical information. For example, I always recommend an ultrasound to those contemplating abortion, aware that at least 84 % of the time, a woman will choose to keep her baby if she can see its image in her womb.

Discussing fetal development is another powerful way to help women think of their babies as living human beings rather than soulless masses of matter. For instance, if I learn the new mother is 12-

weeks pregnant, I'm likely to say, "Twelve weeks – how wonderful! We know, then, that your baby's arms and legs are now moving, and little fingernails and toenails have already appeared. Your baby is now inhaling and exhaling. In fact, she may be sucking her thumb right now!"

I am also aware that a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy may have many immediate, practical needs – from prenatal care and a safe place to live ... to transportation and maternity clothes. Offering referrals to pregnancy resource centers and appropriate social service networks can be a tremendous encouragement, helping her see she's not alone nor out of options.

I didn't have time to cover all of this ground during my half-hour call with Sarah. As the program drew to a close, however, I left her with this parting thought: "Do realize that there is the option of adoption. Moses was adopted. And the way we even come into the family of God is by adoption. That is not unworthy for a child if that is God's will. Since it is God's will for you to keep the child, then God will give you the wisdom to know what to do each step of the way."

Thinking I'd never know "the rest of the story," you can imagine my surprise when, the very next night, Sarah called me back to tell me she'd decided against the abortion. Months later, she called again to update me on the status of her beloved baby girl. What a joy!

The Bible says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:13). Helping abortion-minded women understand the issues and options surrounding an unwanted pregnancy is one of the most meaningful opportunities – and ministries – any Christian could embrace.

Gallup: Slight Majority Say Homosexuality Morally Acceptable

A new Gallup poll shows that a slight majority, 54 percent, of Americans believe that homosexuality is acceptable. Forty-two percent say that homosexuality is morally wrong.

In a Tuesday interview with The Christian Post, Frank Newport, editor in chief for Gallup, explained that support for same-sex marriage has tended to track closely with the belief that homosexuality is acceptable.

"Overall, they're very close and they've kind of followed the same trend pattern if you look over time," Newport said. "So, basically, they're both rising together and falling together and so forth."

According to the poll, 50 percent currently say same-sex marriage should be recognized by the law as valid. In 1999, only 35 percent said so.

Gallup has asked the question about whether gay/lesbian relations are morally acceptable every year since 2001. That year, 53 percent of Americans said that homosexuality is morally wrong and 40 percent said it is morally acceptable. Belief that homosexuality is morally acceptable steadily increased until 2010. Since then, the numbers have remained steady at between 52-56 percent.

Last week, sixty-one percent of North Carolina voters supported an amendment to their state constitution that defines marriage as between one man and one woman. Thirty-one states have voted to add amendments to their state constitutions that ban same-sex marriage. In those states, even liberal-leaning states like California, those amendments have passed, many with over 60 percent support.

There are two possible reasons, Newport explained, that there is greater support for same-sex marriage in polls than in state referendums. First, Gallup's poll is nationwide, but the referendums are isolated to individual states where support for same-sex marriage may be lower than for the nation as a whole.

Second, voting in a referendum is largely based upon turnout. Those who turn out to vote are not necessarily representative of the state as a whole. It may be that voters who do not support same-sex marriage turn out to vote in higher numbers than those who do support same-sex marriage.

A CBS News/New York Times poll released Monday showed 38 percent support for same-sex marriage. Newport explained the different result is due to the choices offered to respondents. The CBS/NYT poll offered respondents a choice between same-sex marriage, same-sex civil unions or no legal recognition for same-sex couples. Gallup only asked respondents if they were for or against legalized same-sex marriage.

End Times Prophecy Expert, Grant Jeffrey Dead at 64

Grant Jeffrey, a Canadian Bible teacher known as an expert on Bible prophecies, an advocate of dispensationalism and host of TBN's "Bible Prophecy Revealed," passed away over the weekend after a cardiac arrest. He was 64.

"He is now without pain, he is healed and now with his Heavenly Father. He will be missed sorely," reads a statement published on the Grant Jeffrey Ministries website. The funeral will be held in Toronto, at a location to be announced soon, ministry officials said.

Jeffrey was hospitalized in Toronto, Canada, on May 7, in critical condition. The ministry said in a statement Saturday that Jeffrey died after suffering a cardiac arrest Friday night. He is survived by his wife Kaye, with whom he had been in full-time ministry since 1988.

Though a controversial figure, Jeffrey was popular and had many followers.

His 27 books, both fiction and non-fiction, were translated into 24 languages and sold an estimated seven million copies worldwide, according to the ministry. They were put out by giant publishing houses like Harper Collins, Zondervan and Bantam. Some of the best-selling titles include those focusing on prophecies, like Armageddon, Prince of Darkness, Final Warning or Countdown to Apocalypse, but also others, like Finding Financial Freedom (Jeffrey was an accredited financial expert) and The War on Terror (politics and history were other topics he indulged in). Among the latest titles are The Next World War, Shadow Government and The Global Warming Deception.

His novel based on prophetic theories, By Dawn's Early Light, co-authored by Angela Hunt, received a Christy Award for the Best Prophetic Fiction novel of 1999. The same year another of Jeffrey's books, The Millennium Meltdown, reached second on Publishers Weekly's bestseller list for religious paperbacks.

Jeffrey was working on a new book, One Nation Under Attack, at the time of his passing. It was to be released next year.

The popular author was a dispensationalist, who believes the Rapture – where the church will be caught up to meet Jesus – will occur right before a period of great tribulation; afterward, Jesus will return again with the saints for his final manifestation and reign for a thousand years.

He has argued, "Some critics have claimed that those who teach the hope of the pretribulation rapture are leaving Christians unprepared for the possibility of the coming persecution of the Tribulation period. However, in thirty-five years of teaching Bible prophecy, I have not witnessed pretribulation Rapture teachers instructing Christians that they are immune from end-time persecution. The prophecy teachers, myself included, who believe God promises that Christians will escape 'wrath of God' in the Tribulation often warn believers that persecution is coming, even in North America, if the Lord tarries much longer."

Other roles he has served in include chairman of Frontier Research Publications, Inc., for more than 20 years; public speaker at prophecy conferences around the world; part-time teacher of eschatology at several colleges; and host of the 30-minute show "Bible Prophecy Revealed" on TBN since 2007, which was broadcast twice a week. The show explored "the fascinating prophecies that point to the soon return of Jesus Christ" and demonstrated "the supernatural nature of the Scriptures." He also appeared often as a guest on other TV and radio shows.

The author embarked on multiple research trips to the Middle East and held interviews with military and intelligence experts, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres.

Jeffrey's passion for research led him to acquire a personal library of over 7,000 books on prophecy, theology and biblical archeology.

Christian Marriage Conference In UK Banned For Opposition To Gay Marriage

The organizers of a marriage conference in Britain have been told they can no longer hold the event on their regular hired premises because they support the biblical definition of marriage as between one man and one woman.

The Law Society in England has revoked its permission for "Christian Concern" to hold the conference on its premises saying that the event would breach its "diversity policy" due to the Christian group's religious beliefs that there should be no redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples.

In an email to Christian Concern, the Law Society's Adam Tallis said the event was "contrary to our diversity policy, espousing as it does an ethos which is opposed to same-sex marriage."

Desmond Hudson, chief executive of the Law Society, said: "We are proud of our role in promoting diversity in the solicitors' profession and felt that the content of this conference sat uncomfortably with our stance. Through our events and venues supplier, we have assisted the organizers in identifying an alternative, non Law Society venue."

Speakers lined up for the conference included British High Court judge Sir Paul Coleridge, who recently launched a campaign to reduce the rate of family breakdown in Britain. The Bow Group's Ben Harris-Quinney, ResPublica's Philip Blond and media commentator Cristina Odone were also due to speak.

The conference had been organized by Christian Concern to debate marriage in light of the British government's plans to alter the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples.

The plans have met stiff opposition from church leaders and the wider public, with some Conservative Party MPs believing that their recent local election losses were in part down to Prime Minister David Cameron's support for gay marriage.

Christian Concern's Chief Executive Andrea Williams has said she was not looking for another venue for the event.

In a statement, she said the Law Society's decision to close down debate on marriage represented a "fundamental misreading of the Equality Act."

"Since when can debate be against diversity?" she said. "This action by the professional body of thousands of solicitors across the U.K., all of whom would be supportive of 'free speech', demonstrates how discussion on traditional views of marriage is being shut down before any change in the law to redefine marriage has come into force."

She added: "How can the Law Society's 'diversity policy' not include the protection and respect of a range of views on the issue of marriage and, why has the Law Society adopted a pro-same-sex marriage policy ahead of the outcome of the Government's Consultation and, without consulting its members?"

"This colloquium was intended to be a genuine open debate on the issues, constructing a case for marriage in the public sphere, and they seem to be closing it down."

The Bow Group's Ben Harris-Quinney added: "That a broad and professional organization like the Law Society would decide to attempt to ban such a necessary, salient debate from taking place on their premises is exceptionable, and calls into question the value of their function in representing solicitors in England & Wales in upholding the law of a free nation."

Blessings,

Kade