

Trumpet Weekly

NOVEMBER 4, 2016

Al-Aqsa Mosque



UNESCO Wants to Stop Archaeology in Ancient Jerusalem

Brent Nagtegaal | November 1

OFTEN WHILE WORKING JUST BELOW THE [SOUTHERN WALL OF the Temple Mount](#) over the past few years, I'd look up from the dirt and notice a camera crew setting up. They did not seem to be Jews, but rather reporters from Palestinian news crews. Unlike most others who walked past the dig site, these journalists would rarely ask questions about what we were finding or what we were doing digging there. Instead, they would simply set up their cameras in a particular location. There, with one simple pan upward, they could tape the excavation site along with the black dome of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the background. After a few more minutes and a few more shots, they'd pack their gear and head back up the street. There wasn't any need to ask questions

or to investigate further; they already had their story: The Jews are trying to undermine Al-Aqsa.

Thus the myth of Israeli atrocities against an Islamic site was further perpetuated. For most people who are at all familiar with the situation, the thought of the Israeli government directly supporting the destruction of Islamic history in Jerusalem seems a little far-fetched. However, that's not the case for the world's foremost body charged with the protection of such historical sites.

In the past two weeks, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has approved two shocking resolutions that condemn Israel (identified not-so-subtly as "the occupying Power") for egregious violations against

the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the al-Haram al-Sharif. The resolutions refused to employ the better-known term of “Temple Mount” to describe the area, as that would ascribe historical validity to both Jewish and Christian claims that this was once the site of the first and second temples of Israel and Judah.

In fact, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova had to release a follow-up statement in which she conceded that the location was also sacred to the Jews. She wrote that “the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram al-Sharif, the sacred shrine of Muslims, is also the Har HaBayit—or Temple Mount—whose Western Wall is the holiest place in Judaism.”

There was some outcry to the resolution and its conspicuous omission of the phrase “Temple Mount,” but there is a far more worrying aspect of this resolution, and it has been mostly overlooked.

Section five of the October 13 UNESCO resolution reads,

[UNESCO] Deeply deplores the failure of Israel, the occupying Power, to cease the persistent excavations and works in East Jerusalem particularly in and around the Old City, and reiterates its request to Israel, the occupying Power, to prohibit all such works in conformity with its obligations under the provisions of the relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions

Notice that the resolution is not just for protecting the al-Haram al-Sharif itself, but for preventing the “persistent excavations and works in East Jerusalem, particularly in and around the Old City.”

UNESCO and its Arab sponsors are resolved to shut down all archaeological excavations in and around the Old City of Jerusalem.

This is critical. Because just outside the walls of the Old City, south of the Temple Mount in an area that is technically part of East Jerusalem, some of the most important archaeological digs in the world are underway. Especially for those interested in biblical history, these excavations could not be more significant.

In fact, almost all of ancient Jerusalem—the city of the biblical Melchizedek, King David and King Solomon—is located on the half-mile-long hill immediately south of the Temple Mount wall. This location is where the very earliest settlement of Jerusalem is found.

It would be convenient for ancient Jerusalem to be located in West Jerusalem, which is considered by most (at least at the time of writing) as sovereign Israeli territory. Yet, much to Jewish and especially Arab chagrin, the location where the most significant archaeological discoveries testify to an ancient Jewish presence (more than 1,000 years before Mohammed was conceived) is located in East Jerusalem.

This is why in 1968, just one year after the Six-Day War ended and left Israel with control of East Jerusalem, a massive dig began just *outside* the Temple Mount. Led by Dr. Benjamin Mazar of Hebrew University, these excavations continued for a decade, performed by local Israelis and by hundreds of volunteers from around the world. At last, the most ancient part of Jerusalem was open for Israeli-led excavation.

Israel certainly desired to excavate inside the Temple Mount, but it was deemed too sensitive to even touch with a spade or trowel.

Instead, in an act of extreme benevolence, Israel allowed Jordan (the defeated power) to maintain day-to-day control of the

Temple Mount. Since that time, no Israeli excavation has taken place on the Temple Mount, or the al-Haram al-Sharif.

The Israelis haven’t excavated on the Temple Mount, but that is not to say it hasn’t been excavated.

In the late 1990s, the Jordanian body charged with the protection and maintenance of the site allowed a massive “excavation” in order to create the El-Marwani Mosque to the east of the Al-Aqsa Mosque *inside* the Temple Mount. Instead of performing painstaking archaeological procedures, the Jordanians rolled in diesel-powered excavation equipment: bulldozers, front-end loaders and dump trucks. These excavators hauled out truckload upon truckload (400 in all) of some of the most important earth on the planet. This complete disregard for antiquity was not perpetrated by Israelis, but rather Palestinians. It was left to a handful of Jewish archaeologists to locate where the Temple Mount earth had been dumped, so they could start sifting the material in an attempt to salvage as much knowledge from the finds as possible.

If ever there was a time for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to speak out, it would have been then.

Even so, the years of sifting that discarded Temple Mount earth has produced a wealth of artifacts that would have been otherwise lost. Muslim artifacts have been found, such as an 18th-century seal of the prominent Muslim Qadi (Judge) Sheikh ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Tamimi, who was also the grand mufti of Jerusalem. But Jewish artifacts have also been discovered—dating to *2½ millennia* earlier. Artifacts have been dated to the lifetime of King Solomon onward: thousands of pottery fragments, the seventh-century B.C. Hebrew seal of “Immer” (potentially the same personality found in Jeremiah 20:1), many half-shekel coins from the Second Temple period, a potsherd from 2,000 years ago bearing an engraving of a menorah, and a multitude of other items. All of these overwhelmingly confirm a Jewish connection to the Temple Mount—and prior to the Muslim periods.

However, as noted earlier, UNESCO and its supporters are not just interested in disregarding the Jewish attachment to the Temple Mount, but also the Jewish history of all Jerusalem. This would include the excavations in the City of David as well, where King David’s palace is being slowly unearthed.

The Palestinians have long coveted their own capital in East Jerusalem. Archaeological digs proving a prior Jewish claim to the area only make that harder to achieve. And so, they have marshaled UNESCO to push the claim of Israeli destruction of Muslim sites in an effort to shut down these excavations.

These come at precisely the same time that more and more evidence of the Jews’ attachment has come to light. Since 2006, the organization behind the *Trumpet* has sponsored its college students and graduates to travel to Jerusalem and excavate these exact areas directly south of the Temple Mount. Working with Benjamin Mazar’s granddaughter, Dr. Eilat Mazar, students from Herbert W. Armstrong College located in Edmond, Oklahoma, have put their hands in the dirt to rediscover ancient Jerusalem. These areas are rich in artifacts that not only testify to a Jewish presence spanning three millennia, but also, time and again, confirm the historicity of the Bible.

To learn more about those discoveries, please read “[Archaeology Thunders: ‘Behold Your God!’](#)” by editor in chief Gerald Flurry.

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Iranian Surrogates Join Fight for Mosul

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



FOR THE PAST YEAR, THE UNITED STATES AND THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT have been planning to wrest Mosul, the second-largest city in Iraq, away from Islamic State control. Given the overwhelming Sunni makeup of the population in the city, the United States did not want the Iranian-backed Shiite militias to be part of their military force, fearing they would treat Mosul's Sunni residents as Islamic State collaborators.

The offensive for Mosul began three weeks ago, without the assistance of the Shiite militias. However, one week later, Qassem Suleimani, commander of Iran's Quds Brigade, was spotted around Mosul. Then on Sunday this past week, gun trucks and Humvees blaring religious songs and flying the banner of the Shiite militias entered the fight. Reuters [reported](#) on Sunday:

The convoys were the first clear sign of a new player on the battlefield in the U.S.-backed offensive to retake Mosul from Islamic State: Hashid Shaabi or Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a coalition of Shiite militias. Although it reports officially to Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, the coalition is mostly made up of groups trained by Iran and loyal to its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Also joining the fight was the [Hezbollah Brigades](#), another Shiite militia. According to the Long War Journal:

Hezbollah Brigades (also known as Kata'ib Hezbollah), an Iranian-backed Shiite militia in Iraq, is transporting forces, including troops and artillery, to participate in the operation to retake Mosul from the Islamic State. Hezbollah Brigades is a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization that is one of several Iranian-backed militias that operates in Iraq.

The convoy, which was seen in a video released by

Hezbollah Brigades propaganda wings, was shown to include dozens of vehicles. At least 11 rocket launchers, four howitzers (including two U.S.-made M198 howitzers), one American-made M1 Abrams, and one U.S. M88 Recovery Vehicle were spotted. Several other vehicles transporting troops to Mosul can also be seen. ...

The Popular Mobilization Forces was established in June 2014 after the Iraqi military and police forces were overwhelmed by the Islamic State in northern, central and western Iraq. Clerics put out the call for Iraq to support the collapsing security forces. Established militias that are supported by Iran and have openly fought U.S. and British troops during the occupation answered the call and dominate the PMF. They were organized under the aegis of the Popular Mobilization Forces, which is commanded by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandi, who was listed by the U.S. government as a specially designated global terrorist in July 2009 and was described as "an adviser to" Quds Force Commander Qassem Suleimani.

Just like in the southern Iraq battle to retake Fallujah earlier this year, the battle for Mosul is seeing the U.S. team up in an unspoken alliance with Iranian-backed Shiite militias, with the U.S. supplying air support and the militias forming part of the land-based assault on the city. With the help of the Shiite militias, the Islamic State will likely be removed from Mosul. However, as we have reported often at theTrumpet.com, it may be that the status quo created after the Islamic State's departure is no better for Iraq's Sunni population. In fact, it is Iran who stands to benefit the most from the Islamic State's demise. The December 1994 issue of the *Trumpet* carried the article "[Is Iraq About to Fall to Iran?](#)" These recent events are bringing that prophecy closer to complete fulfillment.

Hamas Wants to Be Part of PLO

THE HEAD OF HAMAS'S POLITICAL WING, KHALED MASHAAL voiced his desire this week to join his Palestinian rival faction as part of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). This would bring Hamas, a group which is yet to renounce violent terrorist acts against Israel, into the group recognized internationally and by Israel as being the sole representative group of the Palestinian people. According to the *Times of Israel*:

A senior PLO member told the *Times of Israel* that the group wants to bring Hamas under its framework, while an expert on Palestinian politics said the move was likely to take place. ...

Mashaal called for a "united authority for inside and outside of Palestine under the umbrella of the Palestinian Liberation Organization."

"It is time we reconsider the organization [the PLO]," he said during a speech in Qatar broadcast live by *Al Jazeera* at the Fourth Palestinian National Security Conference, which took place in Gaza City.

... In Fatah-Hamas unity deals in 2011 and 2014, the Islamist group agreed to join the PLO, but the agreements fell through. There was also a failed bid for Hamas to join the PLO in 2005.

"In order to build our lives and political system on democratic foundations, we must be partners in shouldering responsibility and partners in the decision of war and peace," Mashaal said.

The PLO, which has been the largest Palestinian

umbrella organization since 1964, is headed by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and dominated by Abbas's Fatah party. ...

"We want all of the Palestinian factions, including Hamas, to be within the framework of the PLO," Wasel Abu Yousef, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, told the *Times of Israel* in a phone interview.

Asked about Mashaal's statement assuring that Hamas would continue its armed struggle, Abu Yousef said: "The type of struggle the Palestinians wage will be decided by the PLO. We agree on the basis that the Palestinian struggle will be a popular struggle."

Shaul Mishal, head of the Middle East program at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, said it was likely that Hamas would merge into the PLO.

"Both sides are looking to find a common denominator. They realize that to unite is the only effective way to be on the regional map, considering the harsh current events in the region," he said. "They [the Palestinians] cannot continue working on the bilateral approach with Israel," which has languished in the past several years.

A possible merger between Hamas and Fatah within the PLO will further legitimize the Hamas terrorist group as a legitimate partner in peace negotiations with Israel. Such an event would likely increase international pressure on Israel to negotiate with the group, even though it is yet to declare that the Jewish state has the right to exist alongside a future Palestinian state.

A Parting Gift From President Obama to Israel

WHILE THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION MERGER is worrying for the Israelis, there is a more pressing danger just over the horizon. According to a *Wall Street Journal* editorial this week titled "[Obama's Israel Surprise?](#)," the president of the United States may be planning one last assault on Israel before he leaves office.

Israeli diplomats gird for the possibility that President Obama may try to force a diplomatic resolution for Israel and the Palestinians at the United Nations. The White House has been unusually tight-lipped about what, if anything, it might have in mind. But our sources say the White House has asked the State Department to develop an options menu for the president's final weeks.

One possibility would be to sponsor, or at least allow, a UN Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlement construction, perhaps alongside new IRS regulations revoking the tax-exempt status of people or entities involved in settlement building. The administration vetoed such a resolution in 2011 on grounds that it "risks hardening the position of both sides," which remains true.

But condemning the settlements has always been a

popular way of scoring points against the Jewish state, not least at the State Department, and an anti-settlement resolution might burnish Mr. Obama's progressive brand for his post-presidency.

Mr. Obama may also seek formal recognition of a Palestinian state at the Security Council. This would run afoul of Congress's long-standing view that "Palestine" does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood, including a defined territory and effective government, though Mr. Obama could overcome the objection through his usual expedient of an executive action, thereby daring the next president to reverse him. ...

The worst option would be an effort to introduce a resolution at the UN Security Council setting "parameters" for a final settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. The French have been eager to do this for some time, and one option for the administration would be to let the resolution pass simply by refusing to veto it. Or the U.S. could introduce the resolution itself, all the better to take credit for it.

As Charles Krauthammer wrote in his column last week, unilaterally setting these parameters for a final settlement would

create a [disastrous situation](#) for Israel.

These would then be enshrined in a new Security Council resolution that could officially recognize a Palestinian state on the territory Israel came into possession of during the 1967 Six-Day War.

There is a reason such a move has been resisted by eight previous U.S. administrations: It overthrows the central premise of Middle East peacemaking—land for peace. Under which the Palestinians get their state *after* negotiations in which the parties agree on recognized boundaries, exchange mutual recognition, and declare a permanent end to the conflict.

Land for peace would be replaced by land for nothing. Endorsing in advance a Palestinian state and what would essentially be a full Israeli withdrawal removes the

Palestinian incentive to negotiate and strips Israel of territorial bargaining chips of the kind it used, for example, to achieve peace with Egypt.

The result would be not just perpetual war but incalculable damage to Israel. And irreversible, too, because the resolution would be protected from alteration by the Russian and/or Chinese veto.

As the *Trumpet* has long forecast, the United States and Israel will experience a breaking of the bond of brotherhood that has underpinned regional peace in the Middle East for 50 years. In the past eight years, we have witnessed those relations deteriorate at a faster pace than ever before, to the point that, for the first-time ever, the United States may be preparing to author its first anti-Israel resolution at the UN.

TW IN BRIEF

Pro-Cyrus Iranians arrested: Iran arrested the organizers of last week's celebration of the ancient Persian King Cyrus the Great. The celebration was held near the tomb of King Cyrus, and it attracted thousands of people. October 28 is unofficially recognized in Iran as Cyrus Day. Videos of the event showed people chanting "Iran is our country; Cyrus is our father." Iranian leaders condemned the gathering as being against the Islamic Revolution. They said the organizers of the event had been under surveillance for a long time and that they will face prosecution.

Pro-Iran president elected in Lebanon: Lebanon's parliament elected Michel Aoun, an 81-year-old former army commander and strong ally of the militant group Hezbollah, as the country's president on Monday. Aoun secured a simple majority of votes in the house, after a chaotic session that saw several rounds of voting because extra ballots appeared in the ballot box each time. Members of parliament broke out in thunderous applause after Aoun was finally declared president. Aoun's election is seen by many as a clear victory for the pro-Iranian axis in the Middle East, giving a boost to Hezbollah and the Shiite Lebanese group's ally, Syrian President Bashar Assad.

EUROPE

TrumpetHour

[IRAN FIGHTING IN IRAQ, SOUTH KOREA'S PUPPET PRESIDENT, PROTESTANT REFORMATION REVERSAL, AND MUCH MORE | NOVEMBER 4](#)

[AMERICAN POLITICS: HOW DID WE GET HERE? AND MORE | NOVEMBER 2](#)

T Pope Francis Commemorates the Reformation That Divided Christianity Kieren Underwood | November 5

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



POPE FRANCIS GAVE A REFORMATION ANNIVERSARY SPEECH ON October 31 in Lund, Sweden, about the great steps taken toward reconciliation between the Catholics and Lutherans.

"We have the opportunity to mend a critical moment of our history by moving beyond the controversies and disagreements that have often prevented us from understanding one another," Francis said.

Francis thanked God that "different ecclesial communities" have "refused to be resigned to division" and then thanked the Reformation for giving "greater centrality to sacred Scripture in the church's life." He told Catholics and Lutherans alike that they could not be "resigned to the division and distance" that have separated them.

Most mainstream news sources reported that Pope Francis's

message was received with enthusiasm. “This is a historic event,” said one Catholic who was interviewed by the *New York Times*. “It is wonderful that we can work together instead of thinking about all of the differences that separate us.”

Austen Ivereigh, a biographer who called Francis the “restless reforming” pope, thinks there are some special qualities in Francis that no others have had. Francis is one “who sees the need for the church to be always in need of renewal,” Ivereigh wrote.

Francis also has a “specific abhorrence of the kind of corruption Luther denounced.” The latest pope has been big on denouncing what he calls “spiritual worldliness,” and has been outspoken on previous mistakes the Catholic Church has made.

With all this common ground, the pope’s speech in Sweden—a place where Lutherans have historically persecuted Catholics—was a ripe opportunity to turn the 50-some years of Catholic-Lutheran dialogue into real action.

World Religion News reported that the “Vatican does not seem interested in continuing the hostilities anymore, despite the archaic views some traditionalists still hold.”

The *Trumpet* and its predecessor, the *Plain Truth*, have been tracking this trend for decades. You can read a survey of these changes and predictions in “[Returning to the Fold](#)” from our

booklet *He Was Right*.) Ever since the Vatican II council, held in the early 1960s, started the official process of gathering in the “sheep that have strayed” there has been a steady stream of progress.

In 1963, in the midst of the Second Vatican council, the *Plain Truth* reported:

Today, the time is ripe—according to official Catholic views—for making the final effort to *unite* the church bodies of the Christian world. The mighty problem of achieving unity is *twofold*. First, it involves *reconciliation of the Orthodox Schism* that officially commenced in 1054 and divided the churches in the East—Greece, Russia, the Balkans and the Near East—from Rome. Second, it involves *restoration to the Roman communion all Protestantism*, which developed from 1517 onward.

As *Trumpet* writer Richard Palmer [wrote](#), “the first problem—the ‘reconciliation of the Orthodox Schism’—is nearly resolved.” The second part of the problem is what Pope Francis has set his sights on, and the [world’s most popular leader](#) seems like just the smooth-talking man for the job.

Brexit Leading to Germany’s Dominance in the EU

ALREADY, BRITAIN’S MOVE TOWARD THE EXIT DOOR IN EUROPE has caused Germany to gain more power, according to an article by Larry Siedentop published in the *Wall Street Journal* on November 1, titled “Europe Grows Wary of a Berlin After Brexit”:

After Brexit, it’s almost certain that a European Union without Britain will be dominated by Germany. The invasion of Crimea and the debt crisis in Greece have already seen Berlin leading the EU’s policy responses. A weakened France means the parity which was supposed to animate the European project is no longer sustainable.

The British presence, though often an unpredictable mixture of stubbornness and timidity, had the effect of dispersing power in the EU. That reassured countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden Now they’re dismayed by the consequences of Brexit. For they fear German domination.

It’s not that Germany actively seeks the leading role in the EU. But circumstances have thrust the country into that position. ...

[F]ollowing German reunification, the temptation to create a more centralized EU grew in some member states,

especially in France. The euro was created precisely as a force for more integration, an attempt to embed Germany in a political union that would give its neighbors considerable influence. Little wonder then that from its outset the euro project has been seen by many as a project to force more rapid integration upon member states and has taken a terrible toll on Germany’s constitutional approach to the EU. ...

In consequence, fears are growing about the centralization of power in Europe, reinforced by recent ill-judged calls from the Brussels Commission for “more Europe,” including the creation of an EU army. These fears are not confined to fringe groups, nor should they be dismissed as mere “populism.” The rapid growth of nationalist reactions in many EU states suggests that Germany, almost unwittingly, has become identified with a dangerously centralized model for integration. It isn’t only problems within the eurozone and the advent of unprecedented immigration pressures that are threatening European unity today. It is the accretion of German power.

The *Trumpet* has long forecast exactly this. For more information, read our free booklet *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*.

TW IN BRIEF

Germany descends into lawlessness: Migrants in Germany committed 142,500 crimes during the first six months of this year, according to a report by the Federal Criminal Police Office.

Crime levels are on pace for a 40 percent increase over 2015. The data only includes crimes in which the suspects were caught. The country has taken in more than 1.1 million migrants in the past

year. Parts of the country are crippled with a lack of infrastructure for the flood of newcomers. The report quoted police officers who allege that lenience for crime within the German system has allowed migrants to engage in illegal activity without much fear of punishment. As a result, a recent YouGov poll found that 63 percent of Germans feel unsafe even at large public events.

Italy earthquake: Another powerful earthquake hit Italy on Sunday morning. The 6.5-magnitude earthquake hit the Italian town of Norcia, leaving several huge cracks in the ground and damaging buildings. As of Sunday, less than 20 residents were injured by the quake and no deaths were reported. The earthquake was said to be the strongest one in the country since 1980. Sunday's earthquake was the fourth consecutive one in less than three months to hit central Italy. Italy has been hit constantly by earthquakes since August 24, when a 6.0-magnitude quake struck central Italy, killing 298 people. On October 26, two regions of Italy were struck by smaller tremors measuring 5.5 and 6.1 magnitude respectively.

Calais crisis continues: French authorities bussed hundreds of child migrants out of Calais on Wednesday to processing

centers around France. The move was part of efforts to bring a definitive end to the notorious migrant camp in the English Channel city. About 800 underage migrants, mainly teenage boys, had been transferred out of the camp by lunchtime. Authorities said they hope to move out all of the 1,500 unaccompanied minors who had been living in Calais by the end of Wednesday. Most of the youths lined up calmly to board the buses, though one grabbed on to a fence begging British officials to take him to the United Kingdom. French authorities transferred more than 5,000 adult migrants out of Calais last week, but the fate of the children had remained unclear.

Better without Merkel: German Chancellor Angela Merkel will not travel to the party convention of her sister party this year. With this, a decade-long tradition of the two parties has been broken. She visited the convention each time for the last 15 years. But the recent dispute over the refugee issue has caused a major division in the Union. Although the announcement is unprecedented to anything the Union has faced, the party chief of the Christian Socialist Union welcomed her decision, calling it the "better option." This conflict within the Union could have a major impact on the upcoming elections.

ASIA

South Korean Scandal: The President Has Been the Puppet of a 'Rasputin'-Like Figure

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



SOUTH KOREA, QUITE SUDDENLY, IS IN POLITICAL TURMOIL THAT could result in regime change. A scandal, full of more drama than one of South Korea's famous soap operas, blew up in recent days. You might even say that it blew up like one of Korea's Samsung Galaxy Note7s.

Basically, a behind-the-scenes power broker named Choi Sun-sil was discovered to have been editing the speeches of President Park Geun-hye, accessing classified government documents, and dictating major economic and foreign policies. Choi essentially had been making the president dance like a K-Pop star, using her influence over Park to secure her daughter a spot at a top Korean university, and also to solicit tens of millions of dollars for her nonprofit companies.

Hankyoreh wrote about the revelations on October 26:

...Choi Sun-sil received and reviewed 30 centimeter-thick [nearly 1 foot-thick] "presidential report packets" from the Blue House on a nearly daily basis until as recently as this spring, a witness recently claimed. Choi is also reported to have used the materials to hold behind-the-scenes meetings to discuss all aspects of governance. The claims were made consistently over the course of four interviews—totaling 16 hours in length—conducted with the *Hankyoreh* from September 7-25 by former Mir Foundation secretary general and close Choi associate Lee Sung-han.

"Ms. Choi typically met with experts from different

areas at her office in Nonhyeon [a neighborhood in Seoul] to discuss the president's upcoming schedule and national policy issues," Lee said in the interview.

"She had a number of these kinds of meetings for different topics—it was a kind of advisory meeting for the president," he added.

On the participants in the meetings, Lee said, "It ranged from as few as two people to as many as five. I attended a few times." ...

Lee went on to say Choi always had a "Presidential report packet" measuring around 30 centimeters thick on her office desk. He also offered the name of the individual responsible for delivering them. ...

"We would listen to her and draft project plans, and they would be passed back to us later as Blue House documents without so much as a comma changed," he added. ...

Regarding the topics discussed at the meetings, Lee said, "About 10 percent were related to the Mir and K-Sports Foundations, while the other 90 percent mostly had to do with government policies like the shutdown of the Kae-song Industrial Complex, which Choi Sun-sil referred to as 'issues of interest to President Park Geun-hye.'"

"Appointment issues were also discussed at the meetings, and decisions were made on who to make or not make a cabinet minister," he added. ...

"It's a real break with common perceptions to say this,

but it's actually a system where Choi tells the president to do things this way or that way. There aren't any issues where the president can decide on her own," Lee said. ...

Choi is the daughter of the late Choi Tae-min, who was basically a shaman-fortune teller often described as a "charismatic pastor." In Korea, Choi Tae-min was seen as a "Korean Rasputin" who held heavy sway over the young Park after her mother was killed in 1974. "Rumors are rife that the late pastor had complete control over Park's body and soul during her formative years and that his children accumulated enormous wealth as a result," read a 2007 cable from the United States Embassy in Seoul released by WikiLeaks. Now Choi Sun-sil is believed to have taken up the "Rasputin" mantle in wielding undue influence over Park from behind the scenes.

Choi is also rumored to have formed a secret group called "the eight fairies" to secretly advise Park.

This may all sound conspiratorial, but President Park

confessed that the charges, at least in the broad strokes, were valid. The [BBC wrote](#) on November 1: "Ms. Park publicly apologized, admitting 'certain documents' had been shared with Ms. Choi and she had been allowed to edit political speeches. 'Choi advised me on expressions in my speeches and public relations during the last presidential campaign and she continued to help me for a certain period of time after I took office,' Ms. Park said. 'I deeply apologize to the people,' she said, before bowing to the camera."

The apology has not seemed to appease the people of South Korea. Thousands are taking to the streets demanding Ms. Park's resignation for the scandal.

Chosun Ilbo, South Korea's largest newspaper, echoed this sentiment, saying: "This is no ordinary lame-duck phenomenon. This is [a complete collapse of a president's ability to run a government](#). The only way open to her is to pull out of government and put the public good first. Many people are ashamed for her. It is time she was, too."

South Korea Fires Machine Guns on Chinese Fishing Boats

ANYONE WITH A CLOSE EYE ON THE SOUTH AND EAST CHINA SEAS knows by now that China's fishing fleets often behave aggressively and militaristically. Part of this is simply because the Chinese have overfished their own waters, which are in many areas severely polluted. But part of the push by China's "paramilitary fishermen" is by government order. The fishermen push into the waters of other nations at every opportunity, attempting to desensitize the world to China's expansionistic push. The fishermen have been even more successful than Russian President Vladimir Putin's "little green men" at staying below the radar, providing Beijing with plausible deniability about state involvement in the push. But this week, in a rare instance of standing up to Chinese aggression, South Korean Coast Guard vessels, for the first time, fired machine guns at Chinese boats illegally fishing in Korean territory.

The Agence France-Presse reported about [the development](#) on November 2:

There were no casualties reported from the incident on Tuesday, which was the first of its kind since the [South Korean] coast guard announced last month that it would pursue a "more aggressive" firearms policy with Chinese trawlers.

Disputes over illegal fishing have dogged relations between South Korea and China for years, and there have been numerous clashes between the coast guard and Chinese crew members.

Senior coast guard official Kim Jung-shik said the order

to fire came during a standoff with some 30 Chinese fishing boats illegally operating near the South's Yellow Sea border with North Korea.

"They tried to ram our ships although we repeatedly warned them," Kim told the Yonhap news agency. "I thought our officers would be in danger if I allowed any more resistance, so we ended up using the crew service weapon," he was quoted as saying.

Initial machine-gun bursts were fired into the air, but the crew [was] later ordered to fire on the bows of the Chinese boats that were sailing directly at the coast guard vessels.

Two Chinese trawlers were seized in the clash. China's Foreign Ministry said it was "strongly dissatisfied" at the action and urged Seoul to "discipline" its coast guard.

"Using destructive weapons can easily hurt fishermen, and we urge the ROK (South Korea) side to ... avoid using any excessive or extreme tools in their law enforcement activities," spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

As China's "paramilitary fishermen" continue to push at China's neighbors, it will leave nations such as South Korea the choice of either responding with military force or allowing the illegal incursions, and thereby emboldening China. If South Korea fails to respond firmly to these incursions, in a few years China will say "we have always fished a mile from the Korean coast, so we will always continue to do so."

TW IN BRIEF

China Cross-Strait Peace Forum: The opening of the Cross-Strait Peace Forum in Beijing took place on Wednesday. Around 240 delegates will discuss issues from politics to

economics, culture, social issues and youth at the forum. It is the first time that political and youth issues are discussed at this kind of forum. The meeting will run for two days. Taiwan's opposition

party vice president attended the opening of the forum. This comes after China cut off communication with Taiwan's government earlier this year after Taiwan's president refused to endorse the view that China and Taiwan are part of a single Chinese nation.

Russian military buildup in Crimea: Russian forces are reoccupying old Soviet military facilities in Crimea, according to a Reuters report. Installations being put back into use include missile bunkers, naval bases, radar stations and airfields. New bases are also being constructed, and a civilian airport has been converted into an air force base. Some of the facilities, such as light-houses and missile bunkers, had been open as tourist attractions before the Russian occupation began in 2014. The majority of the expansion is being carried out by ground forces and the navy, but air capabilities are also being dramatically improved. The Crimean Peninsula is the nearest Russian-controlled territory to

NATO members in Eastern Europe.

Hong Kong democrats stick it to China: Two newly elected pro-democracy lawmakers appeared in court in Hong Kong on Thursday after the government took a legal challenge against them to stop them from taking office. Two members from the "Inspiration" party were accused of insulting China when they took their oaths of office at an opening session of Hong Kong's legislature on October 12. A lawyer for the government claims the oaths are invalid as they used a term for China that's considered derogatory. One of them crossed his fingers while the other slipped in an expletive at the session. Their attempts to retake the oath at the following three legislative sessions have sparked scenes of unprecedented chaos. There are fears that Hong Kong's rule of law and the independence of its courts could be undermined as it's rumored Beijing is planning to reinterpret the former British colony's Basic Law constitution.

AFRICA/LATIN AMERICA



The Vatican: Venezuela's Last Hope?

Josué Michels | November 4

VENEZUELA HAS AN ABUNDANCE OF NATURAL WEALTH, VAST OIL reserves, favorable geographic location, largely Catholic population, and a high rank on the list of desired trading partners. It couldn't be in a much better place for a successful rise in global commerce. But, rather than rising to the top, misery, chaos and poverty are striking the nation down. Venezuela is succumbing to turmoil.

Now the Vatican is offering a helping hand. Is this a selfless act or well-calculated maneuver?

For years, Vatican leaders have watched Venezuela with concern as the leadership distanced itself from its Catholic roots and European ties under socialist autocrat Hugo Chávez. His death in 2013 brought the Vatican relief, as the rising opposition force gave promise of change.

But such a transition didn't come as smoothly as hoped. President Nicolás Maduro, who succeeded Chávez, continued, in some ways, where Chávez left off. For this, Maduro is greatly disliked by the public and faces massive political opposition. Polls show that three of four Venezuelans want Maduro to resign. He is accused of overriding the constitution to stay in power, suppressing the will of the people, and raising inflation to triple digits, as well as the collapse in living standards, widespread food shortages and other calamities.

Maduro's term officially ends in 2019, but the opposition doesn't want to wait that long. On October 28, opposition party Democratic Unity Roundtable called a strike, demanding a referendum to determine whether President Maduro should resign.

One of the opposition leaders, Henrique Capriles, has no tolerance for the current government. "The opposition has nothing to negotiate," he said. "The government calls for talks because it is drowning. ... Talks are not to save Maduro and his regime. ... If I have to meet with the devil, I would do so, with witnesses, with the Vatican."

Pope Francis has been asked to mediate. Venezuela hopes that

with the pope's help the nation will find political stability and a consequential economic rise. Upon invitation, the president visited the Vatican for a private meeting with the pope on Monday, October 24. The meeting was regarded with both hope and skepticism.

The Vatican announced it would mediate a meeting between the opposition and government for October 30. But as the news of the meeting started to make headlines, many denied that such a meeting could ever happen. The opposition would never get involved in any talks with the current government, they said, and the only compromise would be ousting the president. Remarkably, the opposition and the government did meet on October 30, just as announced by the Vatican. Once again the Vatican's involvement in politics made the seemingly impossible, possible.

The question is: Where will the Vatican lead Venezuela? What is its objective? History gives the answer. Europe and Latin America have long held a special friendship because they are united by two of the strongest common factors nations can share: religion and language. Naturally, the Vatican—especially the pope, a native of Latin America—supports leaders who seek to restore these ties. Capriles is such a leader and therefore favored by the Vatican. He conducted his studies at the Catholic University in Caracas and calls himself a "devout Catholic."

Yet, as *Plain Truth* founder Herbert W. Armstrong came to understand, Bible prophecy shows that the Vatican's helping hand is not a selfless act! The very opposite is true. The Vatican has attempted to tie Latin America back to Europe for decades—not to strengthen it, but to enslave it. The Vatican is motivated by selfishness.

The pope's advances once again prove that Bible prophecy is absolute, specific and up to date with world events. None but God could have inspired the *Plain Truth*, under the direction of Mr. Armstrong, to write in 1962 that "the United States is going to be left out in the cold as two gigantic trade blocs, Europe and Latin America,

mesh together and begin calling the shots in world commerce.”

Today, we see these two gigantic trade blocs coming together. Next, we will see the U.S. “left out in the cold” and a totally new

world order arise. To find out more about these amazing prophecies, read [“Europe’s Latin Assault”](#) and [“Europe’s Inroads to Latin America.”](#)

ANGLO-AMERICA



God’s Holy Day Plan

Gerald Flurry,

The Key of David | November 6

Does the Bible establish whether we are to keep certain days holy to God? Were these days given for ancient Israel only? The biblical answers may shock you!



Holding America to Ransom

Callum Wood | November 6

THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT PAY RANSOMS. THIS IS U.S. POLICY. Maintaining such an unwavering stance has long acted as a deterrent for would-be hostage-takers. It has helped defend U.S. citizens from kidnappers around the globe—until recently.

On January 17, the Obama administration airlifted \$400 million in cash to Iran. The very same day, Iran released four innocent American hostages. Many, including those at the *Trumpet*, were critical of the deal, saying that it would set a precedent for nations looking to make money off America.

We were right.

Already, Iran is taking a new set of hostages, eagerly awaiting the next negotiation with the White House. Three more Americans have been convicted on trumped-up charges since the Iran ransom was paid. Robin Shahini has been sentenced to 18 years for voicing support for the 2009 mass protests. Siamak Namazi and his 80-year-old father have been sentenced to 10-year jail terms. Siamak has been held since last October, and his father since February.

To grasp the far-reaching ramifications of the \$400 million ransom payment, it is important to look back to another time when ransoms were a major issue for America.

In the fledgling years of the United States, its naval fleet was small. The British Navy no longer defended the trade fleets. With little protection, American merchant vessels would often fall prey to corsairs in the Mediterranean.

Unable to retaliate militarily, America initially sought appeasement through tribute: \$80,000 was assigned for peace negotiations. This worked on occasion, but did not deter some nations. By the late 18th century, Algerian corsairs were seizing merchant vessels across the Atlantic. The young and relatively weak America paid ransom upon ransom.

America was plagued with corsairs and ransoming throughout the years of the First Barbary War. Peace came only after the U.S. beefed up its navy, held a long war with Tripoli, and subdued Morocco.

The problem had been incentive. Paying ransoms *gave* the corsairs incentive to raid and plunder; it did not remove it. The

arrival of a U.S. fleet changed that. “Capture our vessels, we siege your ports.” Threat of force outweighed the corsair desire to get rich. Incentive removed.

Fast-forward to today. America has adopted a policy of non-negotiation under Presidential Policy Directive 30, U.S. Nationals Taken Hostage Abroad and Personnel Recovery Efforts. This replaces the policy of paying ransoms, but it doesn’t negate the necessity of a military to back it up.

A military is still needed. A stiff upper lip alone is not enough to deter hostage-takers, just as appeasement wasn’t enough in Jefferson’s day.

But today, those lessons have been forgotten.

The \$400 million payment reveals a twofold undermining of U.S. policy. First, America’s stance has weakened. The policy of “no ransoms” is no longer watertight. Second, and perhaps more consequentially, the U.S. no longer backs its words with action.

Throughout the Middle East, America has proved that it is unwilling to reengage or retaliate. When red lines are crossed (on a regular basis in Syria) the Obama administration responds with words, not action. In the Persian Gulf, Iran captures U.S. troops and receives *praise* from the Obama administration. When Iran stole a U.S. drone, Washington politely asked for it back. It wasn’t returned.

In areas where U.S. allies are under threat, the U.S. takes the back seat in dealing with the issue. When Iran test-fires illegal ballistic missiles, or scrubs nuclear facilities, or takes U.S. citizens hostage under trumped-up charges, the U.S. responds with condemnation but not retaliation.

President Barack Obama is not only taking away the incentive *not* to take hostages, he is giving Iran every incentive *to* take hostages.

Look at the immense firepower and capability of the U.S. and you can see why other nations should be thinking twice about crossing Uncle Sam. But take that away—or take away the *will* to use it—and nations will do as they please.

The \$400 million payment shows Iran is not afraid of America—and it will continue to kidnap as it pleases.

U.S. Military Ease Recruiting Standards Regarding Fitness, Marijuana Use

THE MAKEUP OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY IS DRASTICALLY changing as new regulations allow LGBT individuals to serve openly and women to serve in combat roles. Despite these changes, however, Defense Secretary Ash Carter still thinks Pentagon recruitment policies may still be too restrictive.

According to an article by Andrew Tilghman in the *Military Times*:

Defense Secretary Ash Carter has launched a sweeping review of the military's recruiting standards, saying current rules for screening new entrants may be "overly restrictive" and preventing America's most talented young people from joining the ranks.

Among the benchmarks that will get new scrutiny: fitness standards, marijuana use, tattoo regulations and the military's longtime reluctance to allow single parents to start military careers.

At an event at City College of New York last Tuesday, Carter pointed out that the military was currently recruiting young Americans from rural areas at twice the rate it was recruiting young Americans from urban areas. To try and change this alleged bias, the Defense Secretary stated that the military might have to compromise on some of its recruitment standards. In particular, the military is reviewing its recruitment policies on fitness and marijuana use.

The *Military Times* article continued:

Reviewing fitness requirements reflects a fear that today's youth are fatter than ever. An estimated 70 percent are ineligible for military service based on traditional standards related to health, education and past misconduct.

"We have a much bigger problem with obesity and overweight [people] in our society than we've had historically," said one senior defense official familiar with the reform efforts. "So we have a different base to look at in terms of recruits."

Defense officials rejected any suggestion that changing standards for entering boot camp would lead to lowering expectations in the operational force. ...

Rules regarding recruits marijuana usage also are getting a new look. As thousands of prospective recruits are now living in states where medical and recreational marijuana is now legal, Carter is instructing top personnel officials to consider pilot programs to "assess the feasibility and impact of updated standards" on the issue of "past marijuana use," according to a fact sheet provided by the military.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold a massive leadership void that would plague the modern nations of America and Britain. Perhaps nowhere is this scenario more dramatically and distressingly fulfilled than in the United States military. As managing editor Joel Hilliker wrote in the June-July 2006 issue of the *Trumpet*:

Whereas the old military set a standard and demanded everyone meet it or get out, the new military sounds more like a flight attendant: *Join us and stick around. If you don't like something, let us know and we'll change it for you.* Rather than requiring the same physical exertion from everyone, people are divided into "activity groups," and only asked to perform to the level of their group. Great care is taken to avoid humiliating anyone; self-esteem is more important than fitness. To avoid direct comparisons of the capabilities of men versus women, the military has fallen in love with a "teamwork" approach: Forget two men hauling a stretcher with a wounded soldier; the new military wants a whole *cluster* of grunts doing it. Scrupulous attention is devoted to managing the stress levels of recruits. Individual safety has become a big concern: Harnesses and safety lines are now in common use in potentially hazardous exercises—conveniences altogether absent on the battlefield.

This is the new United States military.

State-Level Election Issues That Have Nothing to Do With Trump or Clinton

WHILE THIS YEAR'S UNITED STATES ELECTION COVERAGE HAS focused primarily the controversial personalities of Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton and Republican nominee Donald J. Trump, a number of other weighty ballot questions will be decided during this Tuesday's election.

- The legalization of recreational marijuana is on the ballot in Arizona, California, Maine, Massachusetts and Nevada. Polls show this measure will likely pass in California, Maine and Massachusetts; allowing them to join Alaska, Colorado, Oregon and Washington as areas where people

can legally get high on cannabis.

- Drastic minimum-wage hikes will be also voted on in four states. Citizens in Arizona, Colorado and Maine will vote on an initiative that would raise the minimum wage to \$12 per hour by 2020. Meanwhile, citizens in Washington will vote on an initiative that would raise the minimum wage to \$13.50 per hour.
- A proposal for single-payer health care is on the ballot in Colorado. This proposal would establish a "universal health care" system covering most of the state, paid for by

a 10 percent payroll tax on employers.

- The abolition of the death penalty is on the ballot in California. If a majority of voters cast a ballot for Proposition 62, California will put an end to the death penalty by replacing it with life without parole.

While there is a dangerous level of fascination with authoritarian political personalities in the United States, the moral and economic decline of America is still ultimately the fault of the American people.

TW IN BRIEF

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



Oil pipeline protesters burn vehicles, set roadblocks: Protesters ousted from private land where they tried to block construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline burned vehicles and built roadblocks along a North Dakota state highway where they faced off with authorities on Friday. Officers commanded the protesters to leave the roadway, but the approximately two dozen people stood in defiance with their arms in the air. The confrontation came a day after hundreds of law enforcement officers forced out a larger encampment of activists in what was the most chaotic turn in the months-long protest against the pipeline that the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and others argue could endanger water supplies and disturb cultural sites.

British court erects road block to Brexit plan: Britain's High Court brought government plans to leave the European Union to a temporary halt on Thursday, ruling that the prime minister can't trigger the United Kingdom's exit plan without approval from Parliament. The British people voted by a margin of 52 to 48 percent to leave the European Union in a referendum this June. Since the referendum was authorized by an act of Parliament, Prime Minister Theresa May has said she would respect the referendum and start the exit process by the end of March. Now that Britain's High Court has ruled that the prime minister needs further parliamentary approval before starting this process, the government has stated that it will go to the Supreme Court to appeal the ruling. This could delay exit negotiation beyond the originally

stated March 31 deadline.

MI5 director: We can't stop all terror: For the first time in MI5 history, the director general, currently Andrew Parker, gave a newspaper interview describing the threats surrounding terrorism and national security. The *Guardian* published a report on the interview on Monday, quoting Parker saying that "there will be terrorist attacks in this country. The threat level is severe and that means likely." Parker said his expectation was that they would "find and stop most attempts at terrorism." He said that international terrorism is based on twisted ideology, and that it "brings terror to our streets and most of the developed world, including North America, Australia and Turkey."

Trump's odds of winning increasing: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's betting odds of winning the presidency surged upward over the weekend, moving from trading at 5-to-1 odds to as low as 2-to-1 odds. The revelation that the FBI has reopened its investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private e-mail server while secretary of state is the latest Democratic scandal. Part of the betting move has been fueled by a string of polls that suggest the race is tightening. The BBC's latest poll of polls, which uses the median average of the five most recent national United States polls, has Clinton at 49 percent and Trump at 46 percent. The *Washington Post*-ABC tracking poll has Clinton at 46 percent and Trump at 45 percent, including third-party candidates.



Christians Have Lost Their Power!

Stephen Flurry,
Trumpet Daily | November 5

The key to overcoming is to tap in to the power of God's Holy Spirit.

 Follow [Stephen Flurry](#)

