

# International Intelligence

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## ***Jordanians seek release of anti-IMF activist***

A newly formed committee in Jordan has issued a letter demanding the immediately release from prison of Laith Shubeilat, a well-known Jordanian political figure and activist against the International Monetary Fund's genocidal policies, as well as the release of other "prisoners of conscience" who have been jailed according to a law which, in effect, muzzles any criticism of government policy by defining it as a "shameful act that is directed against the king."

The group, called the Popular Committees for the Defense of Laith Shubeilat and Prisoners of Conscience, says in the letter, that even though Shubeilat's three-year sentence was upheld by an appeals court, both that and the original decision are "basically wrong," and that the Jordanian Constitution guarantees his right to express his views freely. The letter also points out, that "the court refused to call all the defense witnesses, in a precedent in the Jordanian judiciary. Not one evidence in defense of Shubeilat was allowed to appear before the court." It describes the case as one that was "cooked up, to frame Shubeilat who did not break the law in his attempt to educate."

In addition to demanding the release of Shubeilat, the letter calls for the annulment of the law under which he was tried, as well as "the halt of the implementation of the IMF programs that will increase the food prices and cause more hunger in the land."

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## ***Crackdown in Ukraine after assassination attempt***

On July 17, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma convened an emergency session of the National Security Council to discuss the implications of the recent assassination attempt on Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko. According to Ukrainian news agencies, some 500 commandos and 3,000 militia have been dispatched to Kiev to assist in the hunt for the suspects, and to monitor trains, bus stations, and roads.

National Security Council head Volodymyr announced that the new security measures will include dismissal of incompetent and corrupt officials, stricter control over use of state funds, and better security protection for Ukraine's leaders. "I cannot say this is a state of emergency," he said, "but elements of a state of emergency will be introduced. The task before us is not an easy one, but if we don't start to solve these problems, I cannot be sure that by autumn we will be able to speak of Ukraine as an independent state."

This latter comment was an acknowledgement that the measures are being viewed as a political means to enforce the next round of International Monetary Fund-imposed austerity policies, including the regime's plans to shut down 30 "non-profitable" coal mines. Although a major miners' strike in the Donetsk region, over non-payment of wages, has just been settled temporarily, a new burst of strikes this autumn is all but inevitable. In anticipation of that, Lazarenko has begun to fire numbers of regional officials and mine directors.

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## ***Drug legalization debate sparked in Argentina***

Two calls for drug legalization have been given prominent coverage in the Argentine press, triggering a national debate on the issue. In an interview with the daily *Página 12*, Argentina's national secretary for the prevention of drug addiction, Julio César Araoz, called for the decriminalization of drug consumption, as his answer to the government's failure to finance an effective drug treatment and rehabilitation program for offenders. At the same time, one of Spain's leading lobbyists for drug legalization, Antonio Escotado, was brought into Argentina to promote drug use and legalization on the most widely viewed television station in the country.

During a round-table televised debate, Escotado insisted that drugs "were invented to help the human condition overcome three things," namely, lack of peace,

lack of energy, and the "psychic routine." Different narcotics are appropriate for putting up with these different stresses, he claimed, adding that, "On a higher level, the great visionary pharmaceuticals are the origin of nearly every religion on Earth." Escotado claimed that different narcotics have proven effective in helping him through different phases of writing and reviewing books, and said he plans to introduce each of his six children to all kinds of drugs as soon as they reach 18 years of age. He criticized any "war on drugs" as "hypocritical," and argued that legalizing all drugs would yield "enormous savings" for the state.

Since Argentine law prohibits public defense of the use of drugs, a police squad was immediately dispatched to the TV studio to arrest Escotado. But, by the time they arrived, Escotado had already departed. The videotape was confiscated, and the head of the TV station has been ordered to appear before a judge.

The incident prompted David Vinas, a spokesman for the terrorist-linked São Paulo Forum, to argue that "One can and should debate the issue of all drugs. . . . If one can discuss the existence of God, why not talk about drugs?"

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## ***Sudan denies new charges of blocking aid***

The government of Sudan stated on July 21 that it is absolutely not obstructing the flow of humanitarian aid to the war-torn southern part of the country, as has been charged by United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a statement in the government paper *al-Sudan al-Hadith*, the Sudanese Foreign Ministry said that the United Nations could increase aid to the south if it relied less on air, and more on land and river routes.

In response, on July 22, Boutros-Ghali's spokeswoman said that the UN chief continued to be deeply concerned over the Sudanese government's "unilateral and unjustified obstruction" of humanitarian aid to the south. The previous week, the UN

World Food Program had charged that the Sudanese government had refused since September 1995 to allow it to use C-130 transport plans to make urgently needed food drops, giving the argument that arms deliveries to rebels had been made by similar aircraft."

In response to that charge, the Sudanese Foreign Ministry said that on the contrary, the United Nations was responsible for the low volume of relief supplies that reached the south, due to its over-reliance on air transportation. In 1995, some 87,953 tons of relief aid were transported to southern Sudan, 15,532 tons of which were delivered by air, 3,575 tons by river barges, and 68,836 tons by land. It said that Sudan would continue to allow relief services to the south, but it urged aid agencies and relief workers to work toward the reconstruction and development of the war-torn areas, and to support the resettlement of displaced persons and refugees.

## **Clinton administration seeks to unite Cyprus**

U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright recently completed a visit to Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus, as the first shot of the Clinton administration's bid to unite Cyprus, as part of its ongoing mediation between Greece and Turkey.

Cyprus not only has 30,000 Turkish troops based there, but is also the site of two major British military bases, the legacy of its years of colonial status under the British Empire. Prince Philip (who harkens from the Greek royal family) is a frequent visitor to the bases, and Cyprus is the headquarters for British intelligence for the Mideast theater, under Sir David Hanney.

Cyprus is also the major money-laundering center for drug and other hot money coming out of Russia.

According to a British news source, Albright told reporters in Athens on July 17, that Clinton saw an opportunity for resolving the decades-old Cyprus problem this year. "Assisting the parties to seize this opportunity as long as it exists, is now our dip-

lomatic goal," she said. "And our message today is a simple one: The Clinton administration is prepared to assist those who are prepared to take the risks for peace. . . . The time has come for practical solutions and a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus conflict for the sake of the people who live there, and to prevent the outbreak of wider war."

Under U.S. mediation, both Greece and Turkey have agreed to refrain from conducting military exercises in the Aegean Sea in July and August.

According to a TV news report on July 21, during her return trip from the Mediterranean, Albright was forced to switch planes during her stopover in Frankfurt, due to a bomb threat against the plane she was traveling on.

## **France wants to lead NATO's southern forces**

France is preparing to present its candidacy for the leadership of the Southern European Command of NATO, the Cincsouth, covering the Alliance's flank toward the Mediterranean and Southern Europe, according to Jacques Isnard, military correspondent for the daily *Le Monde*, in the issue of July 21-22.

According to Isnard, France will replace its traditional divisions with "Army Corps," of the same size and qualifications of those of NATO. Those Army Corps will be composed of four groups of forces of 15,000 men each.

On July 17, the government announced its intention to create an operational command of land forces based in Lille. Led by 600-800 high-level officers, this high command would have at its disposal the means to deploy forces instantly for national, but also allied, interventions. According to Isnard, there is not yet a consensus among the "allies" to allow France to lead the Southern Europe Command after so many years of being outside the military alliance. The Italians and the Germans think this is a bit much, but the British "are more open to discussion."

**GEN. IGOR RODIONOV** has been selected by Russian President Boris Yeltsin as the country's new defense minister. He replaces Pavel Grachov, whom Yeltsin sacked on June 18. Aleksandr Lebed had strongly pressed for the appointment of the 59-year-old military careerist and former military commander of the Soviet Transcaucasus military district.

**250,000 CATTLE** or more suffering lung disease may have to be slaughtered in Botswana in order to prevent the contagion from spreading. Neighboring South Africa, which eradicated the disease within its borders in 1910, is taking measures to prevent infected cattle from entering the country.

**A POWERFUL BOMB** filled with metal fragments was found in the waiting room of railway station in Voronezh, Russia on July 19, after its detonator failed to ignite the 1.5 kg of high explosive. Had it gone off, the bomb would have caused massive destruction and many deaths.

**GERMAN DOCTORS**, some 3,000 of them, took to the streets in Munich on July 20, to protest against the federal government's planned new "single unit remuneration" pay scheme, which, they said, will drive many doctors into bankruptcy. During the demonstration, fist-fights broke out between the doctors (and dentists) and police.

**POPE JOHN PAUL II** still wants to visit Sarajevo, and the Vatican will study the possibility of a trip after the Bosnian elections in September, a papal spokesman said on July 21.

**FRENCH PRESIDENT** Jacques Chirac made an official visit to Gabon and Congo on July 16, where he discussed the creation of an intervention force, under auspices of the Organization of African Unity, for crisis management and peacekeeping missions in Africa.