
International Intelligence

Heads of State at Niger Summit Adopt Water Pact

The heads of state and government of the nine member countries of the Niger Basin Authority (ABN) adopted a "water charter" at their eighth extraordinary meeting in Niamey, Niger. They also adopted a Eu5.5 billion investment plan, including the construction of two key water control projects, the Taoussa Dam and the Kandadji Dam on the Niger River, respectively in Mali and Niger. The two projects will have a beneficial effect on agricultural and energy production for both countries. Mali hopes to become self-sufficient in food, thanks to the Taoussa Dam. Private interests are also part of the deal. Funding for the two dams came from the Islamic Development Bank, and also from private investors, in a PPP (public-private partnership) deal.

New UN Food Rapporteur: Food Crisis Is Man-Made

The new UN expert on food, Olivier De Schutter, called on May 3 for an urgent UN Human Rights Council meeting to deal with the food crisis as a human rights emergency, affecting at least 100 million people. De Schutter called for an end to biofuel production and to commodity speculation, and pushed for subsidies to agricultural production in the world. "If we had a hundred million people arrested in a dictatorial regime, if we had a hundred million persons beaten up by police, of course we would be marching on the streets and we'd be convening special sessions of the Human Rights Council," De Schutter said, during a news conference.

"The human right to adequate food, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights... should be treated as a right equally important as the rights not to be subject to arbitrary detention or freedom of expression," De Schutter said. "This is not a natural disaster. It's not an earthquake. It's a crisis which is man-made."

First, he said, "it is irresponsible to con-

tinue pursuing in such a blind fashion our bio-energy policies," and called for an immediate freeze on new investments on turning food crops into fuel. "And we should discuss in an open and transparent manner whether the current levels of production of bio-diesel, bio-ethanol, which are not so bio, should continue," he said. De Schutter also called for increased support for agriculture in developing countries, noting that in 1980, World Bank lending for agriculture was 30%, and by last year it had dropped to 12%.

De Schutter said he will also be "exploring ways to limit the impacts of speculative investments." The increase in food prices "has been very much encouraged and has accelerated due to speculative investments," he said. "There are ways to insulate food prices from the risks and the volatility which are the result of these speculative movements of funds, but for this we need to act as one single community."

BAE Technology May Have Been 'Compromised'

A U.S. government report by the Pentagon Inspector General found that sensitive weapons technology linked to the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program, may have been "compromised" due to lax oversight by the scandal-ridden British defense company BAE Systems. The report may also affect Lockheed Martin, which is the lead contractor for the project and has links to Vice President Dick Cheney. BAE is at the center of the multi-billion-dollar Saudi-British "Al-Yamamah" oil-for-weapons corruption scheme.

The report said: "The advanced aviation and weapons technology for the JSF program may have been compromised by unauthorized access at facilities and in computers at BAE Systems, and incomplete contractor oversight may have increased the risk of unintended or deliberate release of information to foreign competitors."

BAE is developing a rival jet, the Eurofighter Typhoon. The report was published after the Project on Government Oversight

(POGO), a watchdog agency, got access to it through a Freedom of Information Act request.

BAE protested the findings of the report, releasing a statement that said: "BAE Systems strongly disagrees," but "nonetheless, such information may have been compromised in some unidentified way by unauthorized access at BAE Systems. There is no basis whatsoever for that conclusion."

The Pentagon Inspector General's report criticizes the Defense Security Service for being led by the nose to cover up the BAE's security lapses. "How can the Pentagon security agency allow BAE, its contractor, to deny access to these security records? This is government information and BAE is stiff-arming the Pentagon. Systemic problems at DSS mean we cannot be sure if contractors are protecting classified information as well as they should," stated Nick Schwollenbach, POGO National Security Investigator, in a statement posted on the POGO website.

Syrian Ambassador: U.S. Charges Are 'Madness'

The Bush Administration presented its hoked-up allegations of nuclear cooperation between Syria and North Korea at a conference on nuclear non-proliferation held in Geneva on May 2.

In a statement dismissive of the claims, Syrian Ambassador Faysal al-Hamoui told the conference, "U.S. allegations about the reactor were manufactured in order to create further crisis in the Middle East... We call upon member-states to exercise caution and not to follow as other people have followed the vein of an administration which can only be described as madness."

In response to statements by France, claiming to have been "troubled" by the U.S. allegations, al-Hamoui said that France lacks credibility: "France played a major and pivotal role in building the Israeli nuclear program and continues to supply Israel with nuclear technology, which is a clear infringement of the NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty]."