

Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Russia and Syria threaten to fire SA-5 missiles into central Israel if IAF air strikes continue

Debka Dec 27, 2018

A new Russian threat was received in Israel on Wednesday, Dec. 26: Any more air strikes and Syria's SA-5 air defense missiles will be fired deep into Israel – like the one that shook several towns on Tuesday night in the middle of an IAF attack on Iranian sites in Syria. Israel's air defense system missed the intruding missile; it exploded harmlessly in an unpopulated part of Mt. Carmel. By issuing this threat, Moscow confirmed that the Syrian missile was aimed deliberately at the Israeli heartland, and was not a stray from the attacks on Israeli aircraft, as some Israeli officials have claimed.

People living in the towns of Hadera, Caesarea, Or Akiva, Zichon Yacov and Binyamina reported that their houses shook under the blast and for many hours the air reeked of gunpowder. A quarter of a million Israeli civilians were affected. That would be a mild foretaste of what is to come if the Russians carry out their threat of payback for any more Israeli air strikes over Syria. And that was a single SA-5 missile. The impact of five or 10 fired by a Syrian battery does not bear thinking of.

The SA-5 (Russian coded S-200) is elderly but it has a very long range, medium-to-high altitude surface-to-air capacity, can function in all weathers and can be used to hit ground targets as well as aircraft and missiles. DEBKAF's military sources note that the Russians indicated that Syria would not launch a surface missile offensive against Israel but would employ a tit-for-tat strategy, countering Israeli air strikes over Syrian air space with missile attacks over Israeli air space. There was no indication of whether Israeli air attacks mounted from Lebanese skies were included in the threat.

This warning from Moscow and Damascus prompted an Israeli official to confirm for the first time early Thursday, Dec, 27, that the IAF had struck several Iranian targets in three main locations – primarily storage and logistics facilities used by Iran to ship weapons to Hezbollah – and also destroyed a Syrian anti-aircraft battery that fired at the Israeli jets. The official did not elaborate, but the battery was the one that had fired the SA-5 into central Israel. This disclosure embodied Israel's counter-threat.

Our military sources also reveal that the three targets attacked in Syria were the command center of the Syrian army's 10th Division at Qatana, its Dimat base and the 4th Division's compound in Saboura, which houses Iranian Revolutionary Guards weapons and ammunition stores laid in for arming the five militias Iran is building in Syria for a long-term presence.

Turkey Aiming to Head a Global Islamic Union Governed by Sharia

by Uzay Bulut

December 18, 2018

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/>

As demonstrated by the annual International Islamic Union Congress, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seems determined to bring back the Ottoman Empire and a Sharia-governed caliphate.

Turkey appears to be accelerating its endeavor to establish an Ottoman-style Islamic government encompassing several Muslim nations. One such effort was apparent in early November at the second "International Islamic Union Congress," in Istanbul. The conference is sponsored mainly by the Strategic Research Center for Defenders of Justice (ASSAM), headed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's chief military advisor, Adnan Tanrıverdi, a retired Islamist lieutenant general.

Other organizers of the congress -- the next one of which is to be held in December 2019 -- include the Association of Justice Defenders (ASDER), Istanbul's Üsküdar University (ÜÜ), the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW), the International Muslim Scholars Association (UMAD) and the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS).

The self-described aim of the congress is "to make determinations on an academic and political ground with regard to current problems in world politics, particularly in Islamic world geography, and to offer solutions to decision-makers."

At the November event, Tanrıverdi and other prominent supporters of Erdoğan promoted the creation of a common Muslim economic market. Participants declared their aim to create an Islamic "superpower of the future on Islamic lands owned by 60 Islamic countries, inhabited by 1,6 billion Muslims, on 19 million km²," constituting "55.5% of world oil reserves and 45.6% of its production, 64.1% of natural gas reserves, and 33% of its production."

Bemoaning the fact that the "Muslim world is in disarray," Turkish Deputy Finance Minister Nurettin Nebati suggested in his address to the conferences that Erdoğan -- to whom he referred as the "leading imam to the ummah [Islamic nation]" -- would preside over this planned Islamic confederation.

"Is there anyone whose power would be enough to defeat the one who relies on Allah?" he asked rhetorically.

The Egyptian theologian Yusuf al-Qaradawi, chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood-linked International Union of Muslim Scholars -- known for his advocacy of suicide-bombings -- expressed similar sentiments at the IUMS's general assembly in Istanbul last month:

"Turkey is facing plots by those who don't like to see this nation [rising] and by the West. They would have succeeded [in their plots] but for Allah's support for President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his brothers. Allah will help Erdoğan to emerge victorious as long as true Muslims are standing by him."

At the first ASSAM conference in November 2017, participants endorsed the aim of "unity of Islam" through establishing the "Confederation of Islamic Countries." Its declaration was approved by ASSAM and 109 NGOs -- seventy of which were from Turkey -- from 29 countries.

The declaration reads, in part:

"Islamic countries have to unite under one common will and an 'Islamic Countries Parliament' which will conduct permanent activities has to be established urgently. [The confederation aims to include] sixty-one Islamic countries... in the Unity of Islam provided they decide in free will and accept the unity terms and conditions."

In addition, a model constitution was drafted, according to which the capital of the Islamic confederation is Istanbul; sovereignty "belongs to Shariah [Islamic law]"; and four of the member states -- mainly Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia -- are expected to be European Muslim-majority countries.

The first congress also concluded that "each Islamic country should create a 'Ministry of Islamic Union' within its Council of Ministers." ASSAM is planning to organize an "International Islamic Union Congress" every year until 2023, to address the "Islamic confederal state" it aims to establish across the Muslim world. Next year, participants will discuss "defense industry cooperation"; in 2020, they aim to determine a "common defense system"; in 2021, they will focus on a "joint foreign policy"; in 2022, the agenda is a "joint justice system"; and in 2023, the plan is to determine "common assistance and security" for the Islamic Union.

Ironically, 2023 will be the centennial of the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Given Erdoğan's past statements in praise of the Ottoman Empire, it appears that the goals of the ASSAM congresses are perfectly in line with his vision of the future.

At a public speech in 2016, for instance, Erdoğan made a distinction between Turkey's "physical borders" and the "borders of our [Turkish] heart": "Our ancestors made wherever they went thrive and prosperous. We have a state tradition that established an environment of safety and peace in a wide geography, ranging from central Europe to Africa for centuries.

"The efforts of those trying to portray this body of knowledge as Western-style invasion are futile. Go to Syria, Iraq, North Africa, the Middle East or the Balkans, and ask the people there what they think of Turkey and Turks. You will never hear words such as colonialism, invasion, persecution or massacre. Instead, you will hear expressions of thanks that have become a symbol, such as, 'The loyal Turk was here.'

"Let me tell you a true story. A team of TIKA [Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency] goes to a mountainous village in Macedonia after long efforts and challenges. A very old person with a walking stick approaches the team. When he sees the Turkish flag on the vehicle, he pokes the TIKA official with his walking stick and asks: 'Why are you so late?... We have been waiting for you for 100 years.'

Referring to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the withdrawal of Turkish forces from other nations, Erdoğan said: "Yes, it has been a century since we left those lands but the waiting and the hope of the people there has never ended. Yesterday, we were there as a state. Today, we are there with our charitable, educational and health organizations as well as our projects of development. You know I say, 'The world is bigger than five' [referring to the veto power of the five permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council]. And Turkey is bigger than Turkey; just know this.

Endtime Jamming of the Mind's Bandwidth: Part II: By Wilfred Hahn

December 11, 2018 by Wilfred Hahn

Without question, the mind of modern-day mankind is under devastating assault. We will continue to briefly investigate some of these tactics in order to document our claim. The attacks and incursions upon the human mind are increasing as likely never before. Moreover, a global communications machinery has rapidly taken form that will play a pivotal role in enabling the Antichrist and the Beast to deceive the world with the voice of one ventriloquist.

We continue with a review of developments that serve to "jam" the bandwidth of people's minds today.

Amusement and Media Share.

Just how much media (TV, radio, etc.) does the average person consume in North America? When we first researched this topic nearly 20 years ago, the average person in North America was watching and listening to media 3,491 hours a year, or approximately nine and one-half hours per day (2000).¹ This would include the use of personal computers, multimedia devices, video games, radios, DVDs, DVRs and TVs.

If one assumes that the average person sleeps 8 hours each day, this statistic suggested that as much as a staggering 60% of a person's waking hours were being jammed with "share of mind" products. We were also aghast to discover the rapidity of this invasion. Another study of that time measured the hours spent upon television, cable networks, internet, recorded music and movie theatres in 2002, concluding that media consumption of these categories had risen 30% since 1977.²

That was then. What about today? Enter the smartphone and other media devices. Consumption has continued to increase markedly. According to eMarketer, in 2010, the average American adult consumed media 10 hours and 26 minutes per day (up 9% from 2000). The most recent survey for 2018 by eMarketer shows consumption rising even further, to 12 hours and 8 minutes per day! What would be the consequence of 75% of one's waking hours being taken up with media of some type? In fact, according to a recent survey,³ 45% of teens say that they are online almost constantly (this estimated to be double the time of 3 years ago).

It would not be an inappropriate generalization to conclude that most of the time being spent in media consumption is focused upon trivial pursuits and entertainment. Of course, one can use media for very worthwhile purposes... study, communications utility... yes, watching sermons and even some wholesome entertainment can be of value, too. But with so much distraction, most of it with questionable content, what room is there for applying our minds to the important things of life...our purpose...worshiping...studying Scripture?

This explosion of media consumption has its parallel trend in financial markets. The stocks of media companies and those offering internet services (including smartphones) have boomed in value. The so-called FANG stocks, an acronym for just four high-performing technology stocks (Facebook, Amazon, Netflix and Google, now Alphabet, Inc.) have risen to some \$2 trillion in value and near 50% of the value of the S&P 500.

What does this frenzied boom in mind-jamming services signify (with the possible exception of Amazon, although even they have their own media-streaming services)? Why should 75% mindshare of people's waking hours be required? Is it accidental... coincidental? Does it align with prophecy?

News & Information Content. We all rely on information as we form opinions and decide matters of truth. But opinions and truth are dependent on the source of information. The vast majority of people rely upon the mass media for their news information—the same large media behemoths mentioned earlier, as well as independent digital providers.

Today, despite the many new technologies and media devices, Americans still get most of their news from television. According to a recent poll, 57% of American adults get their news primarily from TV.⁴ Likely, younger generations will favor digital sources.

But what of the quality of the news? Actually, what is identified as popular news programming today amounts to little more than entertainment. The newscasters tend to be aesthetically pleasing with movie-star good-looks and makeup. Much news content is pure trivia, Hollywood output, and updates on the rich and famous. Real news that affects the heart and souls of mankind—past, present and future—receives scant mention.

As well, balanced international news continues to shrink from the public domain, even during these times of increasing geopolitical tension and anti-terrorism activities. What international news does catch the eye of mass media channels is either superficial or selected for its entertainment or propaganda value.

The result is that the average person's mind is bombarded with entertaining images and populist messages. With that kind of informational diet, the mind loses its alertness; its ability to discern truth from fiction; to see and recognize the signs of the times.

“So let us not be like the others, but let us be alert and self-controlled” (1 Thessalonians 5:6-7). Fewer and fewer people today have the ability to test and approve what God's will and plans are. Moreover, Jesus Christ counseled His followers to be alert and to watch. How many find the time and focus to do so today?

It is estimated that the average American is subjected to some 4,000 advertising messages every day. It may be less, or more. Another survey estimated this figure to be 6,000. Whatever, it remains the case, as one writer puts it, that “The entire system is saturated by a hyper-commercialism, a veritable commercial carpet-bombing of every aspect of human life.”⁵

Quoting liberally from an article carried in Business Journal,⁶ here are a few indicative statistics about some sources of advertising:

TV news: According to MediaPost, in 2013, the average TV channel carried 48 ads per hour.

Drive-time radio: On average, American commuters drive about 15 miles each way daily, for a total of about 46 minutes. Commercials amounted to about 20 per hour.

TV dramas/reality TV: According to Quora, programming runs 41 to 48 minutes on network TV. This translates to about 15 minutes of commercials per hour.

Surfing the internet: According to a Huffington Post article, the average internet user gets 11,150 ads per month.

We have only covered a smattering of ad sources. Without a doubt, advertisers are competing for our attention, in the process jamming our mindshare.

Increasingly, as well, advertisers try to link their products with “values.” This advertising is so effective that a simple logo eventually carries a sophisticated meaning. Youth culture is particularly adept at this type of sign language. By wearing a certain brand-name t-shirt, they demonstrate membership in a specific clique or show that they identify with a certain worldview.

The culture of advertising is also a recent phenomenon. While advertising has been around since the dawn of time, it is only following World War II that the hyper-consumerist culture began in America. Advertising spending per person in the US since the late 1940s (measured in 2007 dollars) has risen more than 6 times.

Clearly, the cares of this world have become the focus of most people. Like the pagans, many allow their minds to be concerned with material things. Christ said that we shouldn't allow our minds to dwell on such matters. “What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:31-33).

Christ warned that in the last days we should, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap” (Luke 21:34). Instead, as Apostle Paul says in Colossians 3:2, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

We have surveyed only some of the major endtime avenues of assault upon our minds. We could also document the rise in the use of a host of mind-altering drugs—from antidepressants to recreational and abusive substances. Increasingly, psychotropic substances such as marijuana are being legalized. Depression has become a global epidemic according to the World Health Organization. This condition can severely distort the mind.

We could also document the rise in false religions and cults that are snatching people's minds. This last phenomenon is expressly prophesied in Scripture. In the endtimes, many false Christs will come. "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them" (Luke 21:8).

"For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time" (Matthew 24:24-25). The claims of false Christs will take up "share of mind" as never before. Indeed, this is happening today.

Having reviewed the rapid and catastrophic "mind jamming" trends of the past half-century, we again ask: Is it accidental... coincidental? Does it align with prophecy? To that we answer: It cannot be coincidental. These trends are the handmaidens to a lost and rebellious world. These are yet another clear sign of the season of our times... the impending return of our Lord.

What "share of mind" does our Lord encourage? Numerous Scriptures leave no doubt that Jesus Christ should possess our total being. God's truth and presence should dominate our mind.

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2). This does not mean that every waking minute is spent in devotion, but rather that the essence and objective of one's mind is the relationship with our Lord and Savior. Another verse upholding this essence is found in Psalm 119:97: "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long."

But, this is not possible today... not when 75% of waking hours are jammed with media of some type. Sadly, all of us living in the super-charged media and commercialized culture of our time struggle in attaining the type of devotion that Scripture upholds.

Apostle Paul was already worried about this type of assault upon the minds of Christians 2,000 years ago. He said, "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Yes, Paul may not have understood the "somehow." But today, we do recognize the devices and means that are being employed to lead our minds astray.

What can we do? Who can fully escape from the pagan influences of our era? We can acknowledge this encouragement: "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:2-3). But in our time of a massive, coordinated assault upon the functions of people's minds, more than acknowledgement is required.

We must also willfully act to govern and guard our minds. The Bible provides much counsel on this task. "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

"The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray" (1 Peter 4:7).

For a secular article, this is pretty insightful:

Could America's "Deep Underground Seismic Scar" Be Re-Awakening?

Large earthquakes aren't supposed to happen in Tennessee.

Last Wednesday, the largest earthquake in 45 years hit eastern Tennessee, and it made headlines all over the nation. The magnitude 4.4 quake was so powerful that it was felt in portions of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Kentucky. Significant shaking was even felt as far away as Atlanta, and that was highly unusual. The original earthquake was rapidly followed by a magnitude 3.0 aftershock, and subsequently there were several other noteworthy aftershocks.

We live at a time when earthquakes are increasing in size and frequency, and many are concerned about what this may mean for our future. The recent earthquakes in Alaska were a shock, but at least they made sense since much of the coastline of Alaska sits directly along the Ring of Fire. But eastern Tennessee is not an area that has traditionally been prone to quakes. Could it be possible that the "seismic scar" that was created when the North American continent was formed is beginning to reawaken?

Prior to Wednesday, the last time that eastern Tennessee had experienced an earthquake of this magnitude or greater was on November 30th, 1973.

That was 45 years ago, and many of you that will be reading this article were not even alive at that time.

Some experts had regarded eastern Tennessee as one of the "safest" areas in the eastern half of the country, but after what we just witnessed they may want to reevaluate things. When the earthquake happened, the shaking was so violent that it actually woke people from their sleep all the way over in neighboring North Carolina...

"Felt it here in Arden off Brevard Rd for sure. Sitting on the couch at 4:15 am reading news on laptop and it felt like the house swayed back and forth for a few seconds. Weird....." – Wayne Womble

"I felt the earthquake in Alexander, NC around 4:15 am. It woke me from my sleep." – Megan S. Bottego

"We felt the earthquake in Marshall, Madison County, NC (just outside the Buncombe County line). It woke me up about 4:20am as it shook enough to cause items on dresser to shake and rattle. It only lasted about 5-10 seconds. " – Paula Seay

But this isn't the only earthquake that has happened in the region recently.

In fact, in the center of the United States there have been 27 significant earthquakes of magnitude 1.5 or greater within the last 7 days.

Eastern Tennessee is not in the New Madrid Seismic Zone, but it is not too far away either. And there are some that are speculating that the "deep underground scar" that was created during the formation of the North American continent may be awakening once again. The following is what Wikipedia has to say about the formation of that scar...

The faults responsible for the New Madrid Seismic Zone are embedded in a subsurface geological feature known as the Reelfoot Rift that formed during the breakup of the supercontinent Rodinia in the Neoproterozoic Era (about 750 million years ago). The resulting rift system failed to split the continent, but has remained as an aulacogen (a scar or zone of weakness) deep underground, and its ancient faults appear to have made the Earth's crust in the New Madrid area mechanically weaker than much of the rest of North America.

This relative weakness is important, because it would allow the relatively small east-west compressive forces associated with the continuing continental drift of the North American plate to reactivate old faults around New Madrid, making the area unusually prone to earthquakes in spite of it being far from the nearest tectonic plate boundary.

As noted above, because of this scar the crust of our planet in that region is “mechanically weaker” and thus more vulnerable to shaking.

What that means is that earthquakes in that area could potentially be far more damaging.

According to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, any earthquakes that occur along the New Madrid fault could “shake and damage an area approximately 20 times larger than earthquakes in California”...

Due to the harder, colder, drier and less fractured nature of the rocks in the earth’s crust in the central United States, earthquakes in this region shake and damage an area approximately 20 times larger than earthquakes in California and most other active seismic areas. Even though large earthquakes occur much less frequently in the NMSZ than in California, the long term average quake threat, in terms of square miles affected per century, is about the same because of the approximately 20 times larger area affected in the central United States. And even though most Americans don’t realize this, some of the worst earthquakes in all of U.S. history have happened right in the middle of the country.

In 1811 and 1812 three massive earthquakes struck directly along the New Madrid Seismic Zone, and the damage was off the charts. The following comes from a previous article...

Those earthquakes in 1811 and 1812 tore thousands of very deep fissures in the ground, they caused the Mississippi River to actually run backwards in some places, and they caused sidewalks to crack in Washington D.C. and church bells to ring in Boston.

In our time, the U.S. Geological Survey has admitted that the New Madrid fault zone has the “potential for larger and more powerful quakes than previously thought”, and we have seen the number of significant earthquakes in the middle part of the country more than quintuple in recent years.

There is a reason why I included a catastrophic New Madrid earthquake in *The Beginning Of The End*, and scientists assure us that it is only a matter of time before one takes place.

Giant earthquakes and huge volcanic eruptions are starting to happen with such frequency now that they almost immediately start receding from our memory after they happen. We have been witnessing one historic seismic event after another, and they are happening so fast that it is hard to keep up with them all. And when you throw in wildfires, floods, hurricanes and all other major disasters, what we have been witnessing is truly historic.

According to CNN, 2017 was the costliest year for natural disasters ever, and it looks like there is a good chance that we will break that record again this year.

Our planet is changing, and many believe that very dark days are ahead for all of us

Chinese facial recognition system confuses bus ad with a jaywalker

It illustrates one of the many issues with China's surveillance culture.

Jon Fingas

There are many criticisms you can level at China's growing reliance on facial recognition, including its absolute faith in technology: what happens if there's a false positive? Unfortunately, we just saw an example of that in action. Police in the city of Ningbo have taken corrective action after the facial recognition system at a crosswalk mistakenly accused famous businesswoman Dong Mingzhu of jaywalking because she appeared in an ad on a passing bus. As with any other detected offender in the area, it posted both Dong's name (incorrectly displaying her surname as "Ju") and government ID.

The police have since deleted the infraction and claim they've upgraded the facial recognition technology to "reduce the false recognition rate," although it's unclear just what they could have done to address this specific issue.

While commentators joked about the case of mistaken identity, it illustrates just what can go wrong with facial recognition technology even if you tolerate constant public surveillance. If there's a false hit, it can tarnish an innocent person's record -- and not everyone has the luxury of bus ads or an easily recognizable face to help clear their name.

Via: Abacus, The Verge