

Headlines:

- **200 Muslim Meat-Packers Fired in the US over Prayer Dispute**
- **Trump Muslim Remark Used in Jihadist Recruitment Video**
- **Putin Names NATO among Threats in New Russian Security Strategy**
- **India and Pakistan Try Again**

Details

200 Muslim Meat-Packers Fired in the US over Prayer Dispute

Company terminates Somali immigrants who walked out claiming not enough was being done to accommodate prayer times. Nearly 200 Muslim employees have been fired from a meat-packing plant after downing tools following a dispute over praying at work. The workers, mostly Somali immigrants, staged a walkout to protest what they said was insufficient accommodation of prayer time at Cargill Meat Solutions in Fort Morgan, Colorado. The company has provided a "reflection room" for Muslim employees to pray since 2009 but the workers claimed there had been a change to the policy. The company, an agribusiness giant that employs 155,000 people in 68 countries, said there had been a "misunderstanding" and its policy of allowing time for prayer had not changed. A spokesman said plant managers met with the workers, members of the Somali community, and union leaders following the walk-out but were unable to resolve the issue. "At no time did Cargill prevent people from prayer at Fort Morgan. Nor have we changed policies related to religious accommodation and attendance. This has been mischaracterised." The spokesman told the Denver Post: "It's an unfortunate situation that may be based somewhere in a misunderstanding. There has been a desire among some employees to go in larger groups of people to pray. We just can't accommodate that. It backs up the flow of all the production. We have to ensure food safety. We have to ensure the products we produce meet consumer expectations." [Source: The Daily Telegraph]

Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, «يَأْتِي زَمَانٌ عَلَى أُمَّتِي الْقَابِضُ عَلَى دِينِهِ كَالْقَابِضِ عَلَى جِمْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ» "There will come a time of patience upon people wherein one adhering to his religion will be as if he were grasping a hot coal." [Source: Sunan At-Tirmidhi 2260]

Trump Muslim Remark Used in Jihadist Recruitment Video

Republican White House frontrunner Donald Trump's call for a ban on Muslims entering the US have been used by Somalia's Shebab in a jihadist recruitment video, a US monitoring group said Saturday. The Al Qaeda-affiliated Shebab use an excerpt from Trump's December 7 speech to try and woo Muslims in the West to wage jihad. In his speech, Trump proposed a "total and complete shutdown" on Muslims entering the US until the US was "able to determine and understand this problem" of Islamist violence, following the killing of 14 people by a radicalised couple in California. The video, which lasts more than 50 minutes, specifically targets black youths, urging them to convert to Islam and leave for the Somali battlefield. It portrays America as a country hostile to its Muslim population, with the narrator claiming that "in the United States, basic human rights and concepts such as justice, tolerance, and the rule of law do not apply if you are a Muslim". Trump's inflammatory remarks sparked a wave of global outrage, with his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton warning that his words were playing into the hands of extremist groups. During a Democratic debate last month, Clinton accused Trump of being "ISIS's best recruiter," referring to the self-described Islamic State group, and said the radical jihadists were "going to people showing videos of Donald Trump insulting Islam and Muslims in order to recruit more radical jihadists." [Source: Yahoo News]

Allah says: «قَدْ بَدَتْ الْبَغْضَاءُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِي صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ» "Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, but what their breasts conceal is far worse." [Al-i-Imran: 118]

Putin Names NATO among Threats in New Russian Security Strategy

Russia has designated NATO's activities a threat to its national security and accused the US of pursuing a policy of containment towards it, in the latest sign of deteriorating relations between Moscow and the west. The statements are contained in a paper on Russia's national security strategy which was signed by president Vladimir Putin on New Year's Eve, updating the previous version from 2009. They echo increasingly anti-western rhetoric employed by Mr Putin in the past two years, as relations between Russia and the west have soured over the annexation of Crimea and war in east Ukraine. The document lists a series of complaints against NATO, including "the intensification of military activities of member countries", "further expansion of the alliance", and "moving military infrastructure closer to Russia's borders", which it describes as a threat to national security. Describing "new threats to national security which have a complex, interrelated character", the strategy document accuses the US and its allies of "attempting to maintain their dominance in global affairs" by carrying out a "policy of containment of Russia". This, it says, leads to "political, economic, military and informational pressure" on Russia. The accusations against NATO and the US in Russia's official national security policy are likely to further strain relations between Moscow and the west. In an updated military strategy published a year ago, Russia stopped short of explicitly describing NATO or the US as threats or enemies. In the 2009 version of the national security strategy — developed under the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev, now prime minister — Moscow criticised NATO expansion and the US move to build a missile defence system in Europe, but did not designate these actions a threat to Russia. [Source: FT]

Russia's aggressive posture is a clear indication that America's domination of Europe is under threat. It also signals a move away from unipolarity to multipolarity, with Russia, China and Europe all competing with America's primacy in different parts of the world.

India and Pakistan Try Again

Mr. Modi's visit to Pakistan was arranged on short notice and marked the first visit by an Indian prime minister in almost 12 years. Mr. Sharif's warm greeting and hosting of Mr. Modi at the Sharif family home set a welcome atmosphere for talks aimed at resuming a stalled dialogue on critical economic and security issues. But while the two leaders got the political optics right, the challenge, as always, will be overcoming formidable obstacles at home. Mr. Sharif has pressed for engagement with India; Mr. Modi has been conflicted. He invited Mr. Sharif to his inauguration last year but soon after canceled high-level talks, annoyed that Pakistani diplomats had met with separatist leaders from disputed Kashmir. Mr. Modi has also taken a harder line than his predecessor on security issues involving Pakistan. Domestic constraints limit both leaders, especially Mr. Sharif. His power is eclipsed by an army that controls the fastest-growing nuclear weapons program in the world and has long played a double game of taking American assistance while supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan as well as militants opposed to India. Mr. Modi seems to have finally decided that better relations are not only necessary, but require his personal involvement. He may also have concluded that improved ties with Pakistan could help him realize his domestic ambitions, which include transforming India into an economic power. So far he has not delivered on that promise, spurring protests by middle-class Indians demanding more good jobs. American officials say they believe that Pakistan's army has become more serious about fighting the Taliban and encouraging peace talks because the generals are increasingly worried that a Taliban victory could make Afghanistan a more attractive magnet for the Islamic State and other militants who could threaten Pakistan. Other experts are doubtful. Whether a stronger personal connection between Mr. Modi and Mr. Sharif can lead to real trust and cooperation on such issues remains to be seen. [Source: *New York Times*]

America is pushing for normalization between India and Pakistan, so that India can focus on its new role, which is the containment of China. However, it is expected that no significant progress will be made until Obama steps down and the new President of the US assumes office.