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To: H
Subject: Fw: Assad emails show he took Iran's advice, joked about reforms-Guardian (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Wednesday, March 14, 2012 08:47 PM
To: NEWS-Mahogany
Subject: Assad emails show he took Iran's advice, joked about reforms-Guardian (Reuters)

LONDON (Reuters) - Bashar al-Assad has taken advice from Iran on countering a revolt against his rule and joked about his promises of reform, according to a trove of e-mails taken from the personal accounts of the Syrian president and his wife, Britain's Guardian newspaper reported on Wednesday.

One of the estimated 3,000 emails which the Guardian said it obtained from an unnamed Syrian opposition member indicated that Assad and his family were urged to quit Syria in January by a daughter of the emir of Qatar, one of his sharpest Arab critics.

The Guardian said the emails, which portrayed an Assad family insulated from the uprising that threatens to pitch Syria into civil war, came from the private accounts of Assad and his wife and was confident they were genuine.

The emails were intercepted from June last year until early February as Assad cracked down on opponents in a revolt that the United Nations estimates has killed 8,000 people.

Some emails showed that Assad's British-born wife Asma was arranging for the purchase of an Armani lamp from London's posh Harrods store, placing orders for jewelled necklaces from Paris and chasing up on a delivery of furniture to Damascus.

But one Asma sent to her husband in late December gives an indication of the strain on the couple as international pressure grew on Syrian authorities to halt the violence.

"If we are strong together, we will overcome this together ... I love you...," the email read.

The emails appear to show that Assad received advice from Iran or its militant proxies on several occasions.

Ahead of a speech Assad delivered in December his media consultant prepared a long list of themes, reporting that the advice was based on "consultations with a good number of people in addition to the media and political adviser for the Iranian ambassador".

"VIOLENT LANGUAGE" ADVISED

"I believe the language must be powerful and violent because the people need to see a powerful president defending the country" and to show appreciation for support from "friendly states", the adviser wrote.

The memo also advised that Assad's government should "leak more information related to our military capability" to convince the public that it could withstand a military challenge.

In July, when his wife e-mailed that she would be finished by 5 p.m., Assad replied: "This is the best reform any country can have that u told me where will you be. We are going to adopt it instead of the rubbish laws of parties, elections, media..."

The email purportedly sent by the emir of Qatar's daughter was sent to Assad's British-born wife, Asma, the paper said, and indicated that Qatar's capital Doha could be one place the Syrian leader could seek refuge with his family.

"I only pray that you will convince the president to take this as an opportunity to exit without having to face charges," Mayassa al-Thani, daughter of Qatar Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, wrote to Asma on Jan. 30.

"Looking at the tide of history and the escalation of recent events - we've seen two results - leaders stepping down and getting political asylum or leaders being brutally attacked. I honestly think that this is a good opportunity to leave and re-start a normal life," the email added.

"I am sure you have many places to turn to, including Doha."

Assad has ruled out leaving power under duress and branded his opponents as "terrorists" and "armed gangs" who he says are tools of a foreign conspiracy to overthrow him.

Some emails indicated that Assad was briefed in detail about the "illegal" presence of Western journalists in the Baba Amr district of Homs, the battered epicentre of the uprising, and urged to "tighten the security grip" on the city in November.

In emails sent to Assad in November and December, advisers told him the government should "be in control of all public spaces every evening".

The Guardian said it had made extensive efforts to authenticate the emails by checking their contents against established facts and contacting 10 individuals whose correspondence appears in the cache.

"These checks suggest the messages are genuine, but it has not been possible to verify every one," the Guardian said.

Other emails showed Assad sidestepped extensive U.S. sanctions against him by using a third party with a U.S. address to make purchases of music and apps from Apple's iTunes.

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