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(Cover photo by Andrew Pennestri) On March 19, the moon is the closest it has been to the Earth in 18 years. It is also at its fullest. This phenomenon, dubbed a “SuperMoon” in the 1970s by astrologer Richard Nolle—describing a new or full moon phase at 90 percent or more of its closest orbit to Earth

—has sent chills down the spines of countless Internet surfers across the globe, fears amplified by its uncanny timing on the heels of the recent 8.9-magnitude earthquake and subsequent tsunami that has devastated parts of Japan and potentially killed more than 10,000 people in one town alone, according to estimates from one Japanese official cited in multiple media outlets.

The March 19 celestial event is also called a “lunar perigee.” The 100-percent full moon will approach the Earth at a distance of 221,567 miles, as opposed to its average distance of about 239,000 miles, according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Stoking the flames across cyberspace are Nolle’s predictions. The “certified professional astrologer,” as his website, astropro.com, tags him, has a remarkably unearthly ability to link terrestrial events—including wars, revolutions, financial upheaval, disruptions in the world’s oil supply chain and natural disasters, to name a few—to extraterrestrial and interplanetary episodes unfolding throughout the heavens. Nolle’s “March 2011 Forecast” (which advises of many other foreboding cosmic happenings), warns of the March 19 “SuperMoon,” foretelling of a slew of natural disasters brought about by the soon-gigantic lunar satellite.