

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD



January 3, 2008

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IRAQ

1. **Attacker Bombs Pro-U.S. Sunnis In Iraq**
(*New York Times*)....Solomon Moore
A suicide bomber in turbulent Diyala Province detonated an explosive vest on Wednesday at a checkpoint operated by armed Sunni Arab tribesmen who have turned against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and pledged support to the United States military.
2. **Suicide Blast Targets U.S.-Allied Iraqi Force**
(*Washington Post*)....Joshua Partlow
A suicide bomber blew himself up on the hood of a car driven by a member of Iraq's burgeoning Sunni-dominated security forces, the latest in a series of recent attacks against the U.S.-backed militiamen, according to U.S. military and Iraqi officials.
3. **Army: Al-Qaeda Feels Threat Of U.S.-Allied Sunnis**
(*USA Today*)....Patrick Quinn, Associated Press
A suicide bombing north of Baghdad on Wednesday and a string of attacks against members of a burgeoning Sunni tribal movement have demonstrated al-Qaeda in Iraq's concern over the alliance between the U.S. military and the grass-roots groups, said Maj. Gen. Kevin Bergner, a U.S. military spokesman.
4. **Iran No Longer Aids Iraq Militants**
(*Washington Times*)....Sara A. Carter
Iran's leaders are no longer supplying weapons or training to Islamic militants in Iraq, the spokesman for the top U.S. commander in Iraq told The Washington Times.
5. **Iraqis Will Fill US Troop Withdrawals: Petraeus**
(*Yahoo.com*)....Bryan Pearson, Agence France-Presse
The impending drawdown of some 30,000 US troops from Iraq will not disrupt the "relentless" pursuit of Al-Qaeda as Iraqis are ready to take their place, says US commander General David Petraeus.
6. **Sunnis Divided In Anbar Province**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Alexandra Zavis
...Anbar is the success story of the U.S. strategy to combat the insurgency from the ground up by striking alliances with local leaders. But though the tribal sheiks' rebellion against the militants they once backed has calmed the region and opened the door to political dialogue with Iraq's majority Shiites, it has deepened divisions among Sunnis.
7. **Oil Production Up And Rising**
(*Washington Times*)....Sinan Salaheddin, Associated Press
Iraq's oil output climbed in November, and the ministry in charge of production forecast yesterday that it could surpass 3 million barrels per day by the end of this year.
8. **Fewer Iraqi Refugees Admitted**
(*Washington Post*)....Unattributed

U.S. admissions of Iraqi refugees are nose-diving amid bureaucratic infighting despite the Bush administration's pledge to boost them to roughly 1,000 per month, according to State Department statistics.

9. **U.S. Hopes Jobs Dim Allure Of Iraq's Militant Groups**
(*Seattle Times*)....Elena Becatoros, Associated Press
...Grinding poverty and disillusionment with the government and U.S.-led coalition can create fertile ground for insurgent or militia recruitment. But the U.S. military believes it has a way to help residents and the village by providing jobs that also could dim the allure of militancy.

PAKISTAN

10. **U.S. Urges Pakistani Steps**
(*Washington Post*)....Robin Wright and Glenn Kessler
The Bush administration has launched a behind-the-scenes campaign to persuade Pakistan to free democratic activists and lawyers, lift press restrictions and allow international observers into polling stations to ensure that the delayed parliamentary election is deemed credible by Pakistanis and by the international community, according to U.S. officials.
11. **U.K. To Help Pakistan Investigate Bhutto Case**
(*Washington Post*)....Griff Witte
A team of Scotland Yard investigators will probe the killing of Benazir Bhutto, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf announced in a nationwide address Wednesday night. Musharraf also defended the postponement of parliamentary elections until Feb. 18, a decision that opposition parties condemned but said they would grudgingly accept.
12. **Is Pakistan Pivotal For Al Qaeda?**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Jay Solomon and Siobhan Gorman
The current chaos in Pakistan could turn into a defining moment in the fight against Islamist extremism.

AFGHANISTAN

13. **NATO General Vows To Intensify Afghan Drug Fight**
(*Philadelphia Inquirer*)....Jason Straziuso, Associated Press
The U.S. general in charge of NATO's Afghanistan mission said yesterday that he expected another year of "explosive growth" in the country's poppy fields, a harvest that extremists will turn into weapons for use against Afghan and NATO troops.
14. **US General Warns On Afghan Defence Plan**
(*Financial Times*)....Jon Boone
British plans to equip tribes to defend their villages against the Taliban will not work in the region of Afghanistan in which UK forces are responsible, the top US general commanding Nato forces in the country warned on Wednesday.
15. **Pakistanis Fleeing To Afghanistan As Violence Escalates**
(*Washington Times*)....Sara A. Carter
Hundreds of Pakistani families have fled into Afghanistan and are staying with friends and relatives in an attempt to escape the growing violence in their own country, U.S. military officials and Afghan leaders said yesterday.
16. **21 Slain In Afghanistan Violence**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Associated Press
Roadside bombs and military operations in Afghanistan killed 21 people, including a coalition soldier and 14 Taliban fighters, officials said Wednesday.

ARMY

17. **Army Helmets To Gather Blast Data**
(*USA Today*)....Tom Vanden Brook
The Army is sending soldiers to Afghanistan with high-tech helmets to gather data on the effect of bomb blasts on their brains.
18. **Army To Review KBR Contract**

(*Houston Chronicle*)...Donna Borak, Associated Press
The Army will revisit its decision to award three \$5 billion contracts to KBR, DynCorp International and Fluor Corp., a federal watchdog agency said Wednesday. KBR is based in Houston.

MARINE CORPS

19. **No Pendleton Marines Killed In War In Nov., Dec.**
(*USA Today*)...William M. Welch
...No Marines based here died in fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan in December or November — the first time a month has gone by without a death since March 2006, according to Department of Defense casualty figures analyzed by USA TODAY.
20. **Marines Put Bell Helicopter's Osprey To Test In Iraq**
(*Dallas Morning News*)...Richard Whittle
On a clear, cool December morning, two odd-looking military aircraft zip along 8,000 feet above the empty desert of western Iraq, preparing to perform a feat worthy of science fiction.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

21. **Freedom To Manage**
(*Government Executive*)...Brittany Ballenstedt
Under the new Defense personnel system, the cost of liberty is high.
22. **Pentagon's Efforts To Fight Weapons Of Mass Destruction Flayed**
(*Salt Lake City Deseret Morning News*)...Lee Davidson
The Pentagon's work to combat weapons of mass destruction has been so splintered and uncoordinated that officials cannot be sure what spending is accomplishing, whether "U.S. interests are protected" or even whether America "can properly respond to attack."
23. **War Effort Disruption Possible With Base Shift, Pentagon Says**
(*Baltimore Sun*)...Timothy B. Wheeler
Shifting sensitive defense work being done at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey to Aberdeen Proving Ground could disrupt the war effort if the Army fails to replace the many workers who are likely to quit or retire rather than move, the Pentagon acknowledges.

CONGRESS

24. **House May Attempt Override Of Bush's Defense Bill Veto**
(*CQ.com*)...Kathleen Hunter
Democratic leaders in Congress dispute President Bush's contention that he has the authority to use a pocket veto to kill the fiscal 2008 defense policy bill and may attempt a veto override later this month.

CIA

25. **Justice Dept. Sets Criminal Inquiry Into C.I.A. Tapes**
(*New York Times*)...Mark Mazzetti and David Johnston
Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey said Wednesday that the Justice Department had elevated its inquiry into the destruction of Central Intelligence Agency interrogation videotapes to a formal criminal investigation headed by a career federal prosecutor.

AFRICA

26. **Foul Play Not Suspected In Deaths Of Two Sailors In Ghana**
(*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*)...Louis Hansen
The Navy does not suspect foul play in the New Year's Day deaths of two Virginia Beach-based sailors aboard the Fort McHenry during a liberty call in Ghana.

ASIA/PACIFIC

27. **U.S. 'Skeptical' Of N. Korea Vow**
(*Washington Times*)....Jon Ward
The White House yesterday said that North Korea's delays in detailing its nuclear-weapons program have made the U.S. skeptical of Pyongyang's pledge to give up its nuclear weapons.
28. **Navy Expanding Cambodia Ties**
(*Honolulu Advertiser*)....William Cole
Adm. Robert F. Willard, the commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, has pledged to strengthen the Navy's partnership with Cambodia and the collective security of the region.
29. **Training By Hawaii Guard Unit Helped End Philippines Standoff**
(*Honolulu Advertiser*)....William Cole
Training provided by a Hawai'i National Guard unit helped Philippine military and police put down a Nov. 29 standoff in Manila, when about 12 soldiers took over a hotel and called for the resignation of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.
30. **U.S.: Hospital In Philippines Not Forced To Close By Troop**
(*Pacific Stars and Stripes*)....Jimmy Norris
U.S. Embassy officials in the Philippines on Wednesday disputed local media claims that U.S. military personnel forced the nighttime closure of a civilian hospital on Jolo island in the southern part of the country.

MILITARY

31. **How One Town Aids Returning Soldiers**
(*Christian Science Monitor*)....Sean J. Miller
...While professional counseling can be invaluable, experts say the embrace of a town also helps veterans cope with the transition to civilian life. If, in fact, it does take a village to help rally a returning vet, then this small town near the Canadian border, imbued with a sense of Scandinavian paternalism, offers a poignant example of the power of tribalism.
32. **Positive Outlook**
(*Army Times*)....Tobias Naegele
The American military — still skeptical about whether the U.S. should have gone to war in Iraq, and still skeptical of President Bush's war leadership — nevertheless shows increasing optimism about the likelihood of success in the war, this year's Military Times Poll shows.
33. **USO Defends Link To MoveOn**
(*Washington Times*)....Associated Press
The chairman of the United Service Organizations defended its decision to pair with MoveOn.org to provide phone cards to U.S. troops after some USO board members were outraged by a partnership with a group that opposes the Iraq war.
34. **Military Matters**
(*Washington Post*)....Steve Vogel
The final resting place for a memorial to 40 U.S. soldiers killed in a World War II air crash remains in limbo, as the Army recently rejected proposals to place the granite stone at Arlington National Cemetery or nearby Fort Myer.

POLITICS

35. **Giuliani Calls for Afghanistan Buildup**
(*Washington Post*)....Howard Kurtz
Rudy Giuliani, trying to reframe the campaign debate on terrorism, called Wednesday for doubling the number of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

BUSINESS

36. **Getting A Fighting Chance For U.S. Grants**

(Los Angeles Times)....Tony Perry

In a tree-lined business park here, a start-up company with 17 employees hopes to compete with mega-size defense contractors and give a battlefield advantage to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

37. **Lockheed-Pakistan Deal Criticized**

(Washington Post)....Unattributed

Lockheed Martin's plan to supply F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan drew criticism from Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joe Biden (D-Del.), who said proceeding with the sale during turmoil in Pakistan is a mistake.

38. **Britain's BAE Wins Work Order For U.S. Army**

(Washington Post)....Unattributed

BAE Systems, Europe's biggest defense company, won a \$375 million Army contract for materials used to rebuild Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

INTELLIGENCE

39. **Standard Intelligence Test**

(Washington Post)....Stephen Barr

The keepers of the nation's secrets soon will be evaluated against common standards on how well they analyze problems, share information and stand behind their professional judgments.

OPINION

40. **A Diplomatic Charade**

(USA Today)....Nicholas Eberstadt

Once and for all: Can we please stop pretending that Kim Jong Il is negotiating with us in good faith? The only surprise about North Korea's latest missed deadline — and broken promise — in the ongoing "six-party talks" is Washington's seemingly unending tolerance for this diplomatic masquerade.

41. **Gays And The Military**

(Washington Times)....Elaine Donnelly

Democratic presidential candidates want to impose the full weight of San Francisco-style liberal ideology upon the armed forces. You would never know it, however, given the silence or equivocation of Republicans on military social issues.

42. **US Needs To Get Tough With Pakistan**

(Boston Globe)....Peter W. Galbraith

President Bush recently described Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, as an "absolutely reliable ally" in the war on extremists and a man of his word. In fact, Pakistan's record under Musharraf is one of broken promises while tolerating acts harmful to US interests.

New York Times
January 3, 2008

1. Attacker Bombs Pro-U.S. Sunnis In Iraq

By Solomon Moore

BAGHDAD — A suicide bomber in turbulent Diyala Province detonated an explosive vest on Wednesday at a checkpoint operated by armed Sunni Arab tribesmen who have turned against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and pledged support to the United States military.

The bomber emerged from behind a fruit stand near the checkpoint in downtown Baquba, leapt onto the hood of a BMW and detonated the explosives, killing Abu Sadjat, a local tribal chief who had just left a meeting with American military officials. The Iraqi police said the blast killed at least six Iraqis and wounded 22 others.

American military officials in Diyala discounted earlier reports that the bomber was a woman, and said they counted only four Iraqis killed and six wounded.

Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a homegrown insurgent group that American intelligence says is led by foreigners, has staged repeated attacks in Diyala against the Sunni tribesmen, known as Awakening Council members. Its object, officials say, is to fray the alliance the groups have struck with the United States.

In December, the insurgent group stepped up attacks against the Awakening Council in Diyala to about one a week, according to United States military officials. On Saturday, jihadist Web sites posted an audio recording of the Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, also a Sunni, calling Awakening Council members "infidels" and "traitors" for siding with the Americans. The extent of the insurgent group's links to Mr. bin Laden's network is unclear.

On Monday, a woman wounded five Sunni tribesmen in a suicide bombing at a

different Diyala checkpoint they were operating.

But Awakening Council members, often lightly armed and poorly trained, say Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia is not their only adversary in Diyala. Iraqi security forces remain distrustful of the former insurgents, and last week staged a raid with American forces against one of their headquarters in the town of Buhruz. The Iraqi police said the tribesmen killed a Shiite hostage during the raid and fired at the officers. United States helicopters returned fire and killed at least 10 council members.

An Iraqi police brigadier, Kudhair Tamimi, acknowledged that many Sunni tribesmen had sacrificed their lives fighting the insurgents in Diyala, but said he still doubted their loyalty and questioned the wisdom of allowing them to serve in the Iraqi security forces.

"Al Qaeda is dangerous," he said. "But the infiltration of Al Qaeda supporters into the Iraqi security forces would be even more dangerous than Al Qaeda itself."

Brigadier Tamimi said that some Awakening Council members continued to occupy dozens of Shiite family homes and were still involved in the kidnappings and murders of Shiites in Diyala.

But Abu Talib, an Awakening Council leader in southern Baquba, the capital of Diyala, said that continued insurgent attacks and lukewarm support from the Iraqi security forces were alienating his followers and could potentially push them back into the insurgency.

"We have had many martyrs, but nobody cares about them," he said. "There is no recruitment of the Awakening Councils into the Iraqi security forces, and this will destroy the security situation in Baquba, because we now protect most of the neighborhoods."

Abu Talib said his

followers remained the enemy of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, which he said had recently killed four of his leaders in Baquba. But he complained that government forces continued to attack and detain his members. "The Awakening Councils are the first line of defense for the Iraqi security forces," he said. "If this line is destroyed, the security forces will face Al Qaeda alone."

At a Dec. 19 press briefing, the American commander in northern Iraq, Gen. Mark P. Hertling, acknowledged tensions between the Awakening Councils and Iraqi forces in Diyala, but played down the seriousness.

"It's a continuing desire to contribute, but not knowing how," he said. "And I think in Baquba specifically, they don't know how to act with the Iraqi Army."

He also claimed that many Sunni citizen groups were working "side by side" with the Iraqi Army.

But Sheik Ahmed Abu Risha, leader of one of the largest Awakening Councils in Anbar Province, said in a telephone interview that the Iraqi government was moving too slowly on its promise to integrate his followers into the army and the police.

"Before, the Sunnis did not join the Iraqi security forces because of a fatwa against doing so," he said. "Now we are trying to join, and the government says no."

Diyala has emerged as an important test for the Awakening Council movement. Unlike Anbar, where Shiites are few and Sunni Arab Awakening Councils have been able to take on increasingly important security functions, Diyala is a mixed province that has been the scene of some of the nation's bloodiest sectarian battles. Sunni Arabs in Diyala, once home to tens of thousands of army officers under Saddam Hussein, have long complained that Shiites unfairly dominate

the provincial security agencies and the local government.

Total casualties on Wednesday were relatively light, but what appeared to be an uptick in violence throughout the country during the past several days underscored the fragility of a lull in violence in Iraq in recent weeks.

In Muqadadiya, a town north of Baquba, gunmen killed six people and wounded three others, according to the Iraqi police.

Three suspected insurgents were killed and one was wounded Wednesday by American military aircraft in the Diyala town of Jalawla, the military said.

In Salahuddin Province, Iraqi security forces killed 15 suspected insurgents in clashes Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, according to the Iraqi police. Two civilians and one police officer were killed in the fighting.

In the southern city of Kut, the Iraqi police said gunmen killed two brothers, one a police officer, the other a soldier, in their home. And in Baghdad, Yarmouk Hospital said six family members, including five children, were shot to death in their minivan.

Qais Mizher and Stephen Farrell contributed reporting from Baghdad, and Iraqi employees of The New York Times from Baquba, Baghdad and Basra.

Washington Post
January 3, 2008

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2. Suicide Blast Targets U.S.-Allied Iraqi Force

Leader in Sunni Group Among 4 Dead

By Joshua Partlow,
Washington Post Foreign
Service

BAGHDAD, Jan. 2 -- A suicide bomber blew himself up on the hood of a car driven by a member of Iraq's burgeoning Sunni-dominated security forces, the latest in a series of recent attacks against

the U.S.-backed militiamen, according to U.S. military and Iraqi officials.

The bomber struck in downtown Baqubah, the capital of Diyala province, where Sunni insurgents began turning on one another last year. These tensions have grown as some insurgent groups, particularly the 1920 Revolution Brigades, have allied themselves with U.S. soldiers against the group al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Wednesday's blast killed four people and wounded 23, according to hospital and morgue officials. The U.S. military gave the same death toll but put the number of wounded at six.

The bomb went off near a passport office, wounding people inside. "When the explosion occurred, I fell down and after a few minutes I raised my head and saw many bodies," said Asmaa Abdul Kareem, 28, who was taken to the hospital. "What happened is not related to Islam at all -- no one accepts this type of action," she said. "We were civilians and families visiting the passport office."

Members of the Sunni security force said the blast killed one of their leaders, Abdul Rafia al-Nadawi, known as Abu Sajad, a lecturer in the education department at Diyala University.

Militiaman Ismael Talib, 35, said he saw a bearded man in black clothes jump atop the hood of the vehicle before setting off his bomb. "We expected this act because we decided to confront al-Qaeda," Talib said. "We have lost more than 25 people from our group, as well as five leaders, in the fight against al-Qaeda."

A series of attacks targeting the armed tribal groups has followed an audio statement by al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden warning Sunnis against cooperating with these "infidels."

On New Year's Eve, a car bomb at a checkpoint manned by militiamen north of Baghdad in the Mushada area

killed at least two people and wounded two, the U.S. military said.

Attacks last year by al-Qaeda in Iraq scared large numbers of policemen off the job in Diyala province. Similar large-scale desertions from militia forces could be a damaging blow to the U.S. military effort there.

The ascendance of the militia groups, now numbering more than 70,000 people, continues to concern some leading Iraqi government officials. Many officials praise the tribal fighters' work in Anbar province, in western Iraq, which is predominantly Sunni, but suggest that the militiamen cause more trouble than good in mixed parts of the country.

Humam Hamoudi, a parliament member and prominent figure in the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a leading Shiite political party, said in an interview that these groups are undermining the work of government security forces, particularly in the capital. Hamoudi said he was worried that many of the militiamen are not overseen by Iraqi security forces and have joined neighborhood groups in Baghdad even though they may not live in the area.

"It has paralyzed the work of the government," he said. "These groups might cause civil war in mixed neighborhoods, especially in Baghdad."

Special correspondents Zaid Sabah and Dalya Hassan in Baghdad and other Washington Post staff in Iraq contributed to this report.

USA Today
January 3, 2008
Pg. 6

3. Army: Al-Qaeda Feels Threat Of U.S.-Allied Sunnis

By Patrick Quinn, Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A suicide bombing north of Baghdad on

Wednesday and a string of attacks against members of a burgeoning Sunni tribal movement have demonstrated al-Qaeda in Iraq's concern over the alliance between the U.S. military and the grass-roots groups, said Maj. Gen. Kevin Bergner, a U.S. military spokesman.

He said the attacks were the "clearest indication" that the foreign-led al-Qaeda was worried about losing the support of its fellow Sunni Arabs.

Last week, Osama bin Laden warned Iraq's Sunni Arabs against joining the groups fighting al-Qaeda or participating in any unity government. The overwhelmingly Sunni tribal groups — known as Awakening Councils or Concerned Local Citizens — have since been the targets of a series of deadly attacks.

In the latest one, a bomber wearing a vest loaded with explosives killed seven people Wednesday and wounded 22 in Baqouba, the capital of Diyala province, police said. The dead included a policeman and two members of an Awakening Council group called the Brigades of 1920s Revolution, a former insurgent group.

Police Col. Raghil al-Omari said the bomber detonated the vest near a hospital in the center of Baqouba. The U.S. military, however, said the suicide bomber killed four people and wounded six after jumping onto the hood of a car being driven by an Awakening Council member.

The different death tolls could not immediately be reconciled.

A number of insurgent groups have switched allegiances and joined the Awakening Councils. There are more than 70,000 men in about 300 such groups being bankrolled by the United States around Iraq.

"I think that the Concerned Local Citizens and those in the Awakening movement have

already proven their courage and their willingness to stay committed to the path they have chosen," Bergner said, adding that council members have been attacked "in significant numbers and have stayed on their post."

Bergner also said al-Qaeda in Iraq remained capable of mounting "barbaric attacks" against Iraqis — and blamed it for a suicide bombing at a Baghdad funeral that killed 36 people Tuesday.

"They are concerned about it, that this grass-roots movement has changed the dynamic," Bergner said.

Washington Times
January 3, 2008
Pg. 1

4. Iran No Longer Aids Iraq Militants

Petraeus sees improvement

By Sara A. Carter, Washington Times

Iran's leaders are no longer supplying weapons or training to Islamic militants in Iraq, the spokesman for the top U.S. commander in Iraq told The Washington Times.

Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, sees Iran as following through on assurances it made to Iraqi and U.S. officials last fall not to assist extremists in Iraq, spokesman Col. Steven Boylan said, adding that other U.S. officials have noted declines in Iranian weapons and funds to Iraqi insurgents.

"We are ready to confirm the excellence of the senior Iranian leadership in their pledge to stop the funding, training, equipment and resourcing of the militia special groups," Col. Boylan said. "We have seen a downward trend in the signature-type attacks using weapons provided by Iran."

In October, U.S. military officials began noticing a decrease in the supply of Iranian weapons and assistance, Col. Boylan added.

The disclosure comes just weeks after a National Intelligence Estimate pruned

back its assessment of Iran's nuclear program, saying "with high confidence" that the Islamic republic had halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003 in the wake of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Tehran's aid for Islamic militias in Iraq and its nuclear program have resulted in calls from some in Washington for military action against Iran, and these two developments are likely to dampen such calls.

Some outside analysts have argued, though, that Iran-based aid may be getting to Iraqi insurgents without the approval of the government in Tehran.

But the colonel cautioned that while Iran's efforts are promising, U.S. military officials remain wary, partly over some contrary events on the ground in Iraq.

For example, he disclosed that U.S. troops "recently captured individuals who have been in Iran, training, as short as 45-60 days ago." He did not elaborate on the circumstances surrounding the captured individuals or the possible investigation.

"We are very much in the wait-and-see mode to see what happens," Col. Boylan said.

In July, four terrorists linked to an Iranian smuggling operation — responsible for targeting coalition forces with powerful bombs — were captured in Iraq.

The confirmation of Iran's cooperation also comes at a time when U.S. military officials have confirmed a 60 percent decrease in violence, including improvised explosive device attacks and civilian deaths in Iraq.

Last year, U.S. military officials publicly released evidence of links between Iran and insurgents, including weapons, such as improvised explosive devices and mortars, that bore the markings of Iran's Revolutionary Guard. The smuggling of deadly explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) — warhead-style weapons that can pierce armor

and that have caused the most casualties and damage to U.S. forces — also was traced back to Iran.

In December, the Pentagon issued a report to Congress titled "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" stating that Iran is continuing to supply weapons and personnel to train insurgents in Iraq. It suggested that the recent declines in violence aren't the result of Iran's claims that it has squelched involvement in Iraq but to other factors, such as the troop surge.

"There has been no identified decrease in Iranian training and funding of illegal Shi'a militias in Iraq," the report stated. "Tehran's support for Shi'a militant groups who attack Coalition and Iraq forces remains a significant impediment to progress toward stabilization."

Army Lt. Col. Mark Ballesteros, a Pentagon spokesman, said the words from Gen. Petraeus' office on Iran's cutting aid don't contradict the Department of Defense Iraq report, because it was based on information obtained prior to the end of the November deadline.

"The report we issued to Congress is meant to be retrospective in nature," Col. Ballesteros said. "It is meant to cover the last 90 days of data and provides a snapshot of that period on the ground."

Col. Boylan stated that despite Iran's current cooperation, Islamic radicals and terrorist groups still pose a serious danger to stability in the region.

Yahoo.com
January 3, 2008

5. Iraqis Will Fill US Troop Withdrawals: Petraeus

By Bryan Pearson, Agence France-Presse

OWESAT, Iraq -- The impending drawdown of some 30,000 US troops from Iraq will not disrupt the "relentless"

pursuit of Al-Qaeda as Iraqis are ready to take their place, says US commander General David Petraeus.

Washington has projected the withdrawal of five units by July, which would bring the number of US troops in Iraq down from a current 160,000 to about 130,000 -- the level before a "surge" was launched last February.

Speaking on Wednesday in Owesat village on the banks of the Euphrates, about 25 kilometres (17 miles) southwest of Baghdad near the town of Yusufiyah, Petraeus vowed no quarter would be given in the fight against Osama bin Laden's extremist network, blamed for much of the violence in Iraq.

"We cannot let up -- they are much more on the defensive right now than they have been in years and that is where we have to keep them," Washington's top general in Iraq said as he declared the village of Owesat, just months ago a hotbed of Sunni insurgency, now secure.

"This was a small Al-Qaeda sanctuary that offered an opportunity to go right across the river and right into Baghdad," he said.

"Having this secured is very important to the overall security of the Iraqi capital."

He shrugged off concerns that the US troop withdrawals could see a reversal of gains made in the past six months, when according to US figures, the number of attacks across Iraq has dropped by 62 percent.

"It is very important to remember that our surge is dwarfed by the Iraqi surge that is taking place," said Petraeus, on one of his trademark "battlefield" tours, accompanied by a small group of reporters.

"The official Iraqi security forces has increased by something like 110,000 or so in the past year -- during which (time) our surge was 30,000," he said after visiting the rural village, reaching it on foot by crossing a floating bridge the

US military has constructed across the Euphrates.

"There are also 70,000 plus concerned local citizens who are now helping our forces and our Iraqi partners," he added, referring to members of powerful anti-Qaeda fronts being formed across the country by the US military.

The 30,000 US "surge" troops were deployed from February last year in a bid to quell raging sectarian violence that has killed thousands of Iraqis.

According to a Pentagon report last week, the surge has been working, with US forces achieving "significant security progress" in Iraq over the past three months and the number of attacks across the country down 62 percent.

Lean and tanned from his regular walkabouts in Iraqi frontline villages, the 54-year-old Petraeus was upbeat on Wednesday about the ongoing operations against Al-Qaeda.

"Because the Iraqi generation of additional army and police forces will continue throughout 2008, it allows us to hold an area that has been cleared and then we continue to move on farther with our Iraqi partners and the support of the locals," he said.

After meeting US military commanders, tribal sheikhs, local farmers and members of concerned local citizens groups, Petraeus warned that insurgents still posed a dangerous threat in Iraq, as indicated by a suicide bomb attack on a funeral in Baghdad on Tuesday that killed at least 30 people.

While the creation of concerned local citizens groups across the country was paying dividends, he acknowledged that there are concerns over the programme.

"There are understandably a host of issues connected with concerned local citizens ... certainly there are worries that they may be infiltrated by Al-Qaeda or by affiliated insurgent groups, that they

could at some point in time turn on the government of Iraq," said the paratrooper, his boots kicking up clouds of dust as he strode along tracks that zig-zag through the farmlands.

"Those are all legitimate concerns. And the way to address them is to get them incorporated into the official security forces of Iraq and become part of the police with a chain of command that goes all the way to the national ministry of the interior.

"Their pay cheque would therefore come from the ministry. That gives a pretty substantial hold on them."

He cited developments in the city of Fallujah in western Anbar province as further reason he is optimistic Iraq's security forces can take over when US troops begin withdrawing.

"Fallujah, which used to be held completely by an Iraqi army brigade or more plus our marines or soldiers over time is now completely held by Iraqi police ... Our units and Iraqi army units have been able to move outside the city and pursue Al-Qaeda more to the north and south."

Los Angeles Times
January 3, 2008

6. Sunnis Divided In Anbar Province

The tribal leaders who helped calm the area want a share in the provincial council dominated by a rival Sunni bloc, saying they are the true representatives of the region's inhabitants.

By Alexandra Zavis, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

RAMADI, IRAQ —From a podium decked in flowers and the Iraqi flag, a Sunni Muslim sheik in a pinstriped suit politely welcomed the Shiite guests who had driven up from Baghdad, before launching into a tirade about the lack of jobs and essential services in this former insurgent bastion.

The focus of his anger, however, was not the Shiite-led

national government, but fellow Sunni Arabs on the Anbar provincial council.

Anbar is the success story of the U.S. strategy to combat the insurgency from the ground up by striking alliances with local leaders. But though the tribal sheiks' rebellion against the militants they once backed has calmed the region and opened the door to political dialogue with Iraq's majority Shiites, it has deepened divisions among Sunnis.

As violence has faded, an argument has been raging over who really speaks for Iraq's Sunni Arab minority: the province's largely secular and fiercely independent tribal leaders, who resisted the U.S. invasion, or the main Sunni political party, an Islamist group led by former exiles who cooperated with the Americans from the start.

In just over a year, Anbar's sheiks have helped accomplish what U.S. military might, and endless rounds of political negotiations, could not: driving out the extremists who had flourished in Iraq's western desert since the invasion in 2003. Pockets of resistance remain in Anbar, but the U.S. command says many of the Sunni insurgents, now allied with the group calling itself Al Qaeda in Iraq, are seeking new sanctuaries north of Baghdad.

Now, the sheiks say, it's payback time. They want more schools, better healthcare, clean water and reliable electricity for their war-ravaged province. They want jobs for their followers. And above all, they want a stake in government for their Iraqi Awakening Conference movement.

"Anbar is a tribal society, and the Awakening came from the tribes," said Sheik Ahmed abu Risha, who succeeded his slain brother, Abdul-Sattar abu Risha, at the helm of the movement in September.

The sheiks accuse the Iraqi Islamic Party, which controls the local councils in most Sunni areas, of hijacking

development funds and monopolizing jobs for their own supporters.

"There is corruption up to here," Sheik Hameed Farhan Hays said, raising his hand to his forehead, after delivering his speech during a recent visit by a representative of Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's government.

Leaders of the Iraqi Islamic Party countered that the sheiks had only themselves to blame for boycotting the 2005 elections that ushered in representative government in Iraq. And they challenged the sheiks to take their accusations of corruption to court.

"Those people now shouting and screaming, where were they in the past?" demanded Tariq Hashimi, Iraq's Sunni vice president. "They should be ashamed about their history."

Whether true or not, the accusations underscore the mistrust between the two sides. For now, it is a war of words. But some worry that the dispute could escalate.

Saleh Mutlak, who heads a rival Sunni political group that has joined forces with the Islamic Party in parliament, said the sheiks asked him to convey a message to his allies.

"Unless there is a solution ... then we will use our guns to displace the Islamic Party from Anbar," he quoted the sheiks as telling him.

U.S. officials play down the danger posed by the power struggle, noting that the province is recording its lowest level of violence since the war began. But they say such conflicts underscore the need for new elections to decide who controls Iraq's provinces.

"Whether you're looking at the south, and unresolved issues and tensions as to who will wield how much power, or places like Anbar, where the tribes having not participated in the previous elections find themselves in a position of some prominence yet without representation in established political structures ... it's

probably going to be fairly important to have elections within the coming year as a means of regulating this competition," U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker told reporters in Baghdad.

With most Sunnis boycotting the January 2005 vote, the Islamic Party won control of the governing council -- and the \$170-million budget -- in overwhelmingly Sunni Anbar with the participation of less than 5% of voters. The sheiks argue that the low level of support is grounds for new elections.

Iyad Samarrai, the Islamic Party's secretary-general, said he was as unhappy about the vote as they are. The boycott gave the majority Shiites and ethnic Kurds a disproportionate share of provincial council seats in mixed parts of the country, as well as in the national parliament.

More Sunnis voted in the December 2005 parliamentary polls, which eased the imbalance at the national level, but new provincial elections have been postponed pending agreement on a law setting out the relationship between national and regional governments. That bill is one of several key power-sharing measures that have stalled in the fragmented parliament.

With no provincial elections in sight, the Islamic Party agreed over the summer to make room on the Anbar provincial council for nine sheiks. Maliki has also floated the idea of appointing sheiks to fill some of the vacancies in his Cabinet after the Iraqi Accordance Front, the Sunni political alliance that includes the Islamic Party, walked out in August after accusing him of refusing to share power. But the Islamic Party has warned that he could face difficulties getting the nominations approved by parliament.

Analysts say the Sunni political parties, which until recently had been the United States' main Sunni negotiating partners, never have

commanded the popular support of some of their Shiite rivals.

"I think we wasted a lot of time talking to the wrong Sunnis," said Vali Nasr, an international politics professor and Iraq expert at Tufts University. "Ultimately these ones are not the ones who are in charge of the insurgency."

The tribal Awakening Conference has shown that it can deliver, at least in Anbar.

Life is returning to Ramadi, a city of 400,000 about 60 miles west of Baghdad. Painters are sprucing up facades on streets still marred by demolished buildings. Children in crisp blue and white uniforms pour out of school. A white-gloved policeman directs traffic near the refurbished governance center, once the scene of heavy combat.

Shiite leaders have taken note, and there has been a flurry of meetings, aided by what the U.S. military refers to as its "helicopter diplomacy." When the Sunni sheiks asked for a meeting with Ahmad Chalabi, Maliki's new point man for restoring services, it took just two days for him to arrive in a convoy bristling with gunmen, accompanied by a large entourage of Shiite sheiks, aides and journalists.

At the meeting, the Sunni sheiks accused the provincial council of issuing reconstruction contracts to companies affiliated with its members and of handing out Islamic Party membership forms with job applications.

In November, Abu Risha pulled his nine followers off the provincial council, but later agreed to join a new advisory panel. He is now urging ministers in Baghdad to set up a committee to take charge of reconstruction in the province.

Vice President Hashimi said the claims of wrongdoing were baseless, but that he had ordered an investigation. Others in the party say it is too soon to expect results from a reconstruction process that

began only six months ago.

"They need to be patient," Samarrai said.

Times staff writer Tina Susman in Baghdad and a special correspondent in Ramadi contributed to this report.

Washington Times
January 3, 2008

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7. Oil Production Up And Rising

3 million barrels a day forecast

By Sinan Salaheddin,
Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iraq's oil output climbed in November, and the ministry in charge of production forecast yesterday that it could surpass 3 million barrels per day by the end of this year.

After a sharp slump in the wake of the U.S.-led 2003 invasion, ministry spokesman Assem Jihad said Iraq's average production was up to 2.4 million barrels per day in November. Exports stood at about 1.9 million barrels per day and sold at an average price of \$83.87 per barrel.

The new production figures came on a day when world oil prices topped \$100 a barrel for the first time.

Since 2003, Iraqi production has mostly hovered between 1.7 million and 2 million barrels per day, according to the International Energy Agency. Prewar production was 2.58 million barrels per day.

Mr. Jihad added that the exports had grossed \$4.94 billion in November, which made up more than 90 percent of Iraq's revenue.

"The ministry's ambition is to increase the production to more than 3 million [barrels per day] by the end of 2008 and to pass the national oil law, which will enable us to draw foreign investment to our oil resources," he said.

He added that resuming oil shipments through a pipeline from Iraq's Kirkuk oil fields into the Turkish Ceyhan export

terminal, which was often halted in past years by sabotage, had given Iraq more flexibility to increase production.

Iraq's political factions last February drafted the first version of a bill to regulate the country's oil industry in an effort to share its revenue among the Shi'ite, Sunni and Kurdish communities.

But the effort bogged down in parliament, mostly over delicate power-sharing issues involving the central government in Iraq. The Kurds, for example, want a greater say in managing oil fields in their self-ruled area of the north.

Iraqi oil officials said recently they hoped to issue tenders to develop the country's vast oil fields at the beginning of 2008. They said the oil ministry was preparing contract models for the first group of oil fields.

Separately, a suicide bombing near a hospital in Baqouba, the capital of Diyala province north of Baghdad, killed seven persons and wounded 22, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials. Among the dead were a police officer and two members of a local Sunni council that is cooperating with U.S. and coalition forces after initially resisting.

Al Qaeda and Islamist extremists have been targeting members of the Sunni "Awakening Councils," even as direct attacks on U.S. forces have fallen sharply in recent months.

U.S. spokesman Maj. Gen. Kevin Bergner said such attacks were the "clearest indication" that foreign-led al Qaeda forces were worried about losing the support of fellow Sunni Arabs inside Iraq.

With the aid of local Sunni allies, U.S. troops killed or captured 51 al Qaeda operatives in December, Gen. Bergner said. But he added that the terrorist group remains the top security challenge for U.S. and Iraqi government forces in 2008.

Washington Post
January 3, 2008
Pg. 4

8. Fewer Iraqi Refugees Admitted

U.S. admissions of Iraqi refugees are nose-diving amid bureaucratic infighting despite the Bush administration's pledge to boost them to roughly 1,000 per month, according to State Department statistics.

For the third straight month since the United States said it would improve processing and resettle 12,000 Iraqis by the end of the current budget year on Sept. 30, the number admitted has actually slid, the figures show.

The steady decline -- from 450 in October to 362 in November and 245 in December -- means the administration will have to allow in 10,943 Iraqis over the next nine months, or roughly 1,215 per month, to meet the target it has set for itself.

But that goal will be difficult to meet, and there are few precedents for such influxes since hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese refugees were resettled here after the Vietnam War ended in 1975.

Iraqi refugees are subject to more security checks than those from almost all other nations, and the most Iraqis ever admitted to the United States in a single month since 2003 was 889 last September.

The administration has come under heavy criticism from advocacy groups and lawmakers for its poor performance on admitting Iraqi refugees who have fled violence since the 2003 U.S. invasion. Many critics say, and Bush aides have acknowledged, that the administration has a moral obligation to Iraqi refugees.

U.S. officials have conceded that the figures remained low but insisted that improvements in processing, along with new cooperation

from Syrian authorities, would lead to substantial jumps in the admissions figures from Iraq starting in the spring. And they insisted yesterday that the 12,000 target remained administration policy.

"The goals are still the same," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said. "We haven't lowered the bar."

According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 2 million Iraqis have fled their country. Of these, 1.2 million are in Syria, 750,000 in Jordan, 100,000 in Egypt, 54,000 in Iran, 40,000 in Lebanon, 10,000 in Turkey and 200,000 in various Persian Gulf countries.

Seattle Times
January 3, 2008

9. U.S. Hopes Jobs Dim Allure Of Iraq's Militant Groups

By Elena Becatoros,
Associated Press

HUDA, Iraq — Children skip across a stream of raw sewage on a side road, trash piles up in a dusty lot and there are few desks — and even fewer chairs — in the village school's dark, cold classrooms.

On the main street, fruits and vegetables are displayed for sale on sacks lying under corrugated metal awnings.

Huda, a Shiite village of about 3,000 southeast of Baghdad, sits on the edge of a region the U.S. military and locals say is dominated by insurgents and al-Qaida in Iraq. Here, many men are out of work, and the village is in desperate need of basic services.

Grinding poverty and disillusionment with the government and U.S.-led coalition can create fertile ground for insurgent or militia recruitment.

But the U.S. military believes it has a way to help residents and the village by providing jobs that also could

dim the allure of militancy.

Modeled on a program under which the U.S. pays armed groups who turned against al-Qaida in Iraq, the military has begun recruiting villagers for public-service jobs — working to improve sanitation, do repairs and pick up trash.

"Today is a new idea," said Capt. John Horning, the 36-year-old company commander of C Company, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment stationed in the area. Instead of hiring people to secure their neighborhoods, "we'll have them doing sanitation, cleaning up the area, reconstruction."

"It's a pilot program," said Horning, from Houston, Texas. "We'll see how it works."

The hope is that the jobs will give residents a legitimate way to make a living and prevent them from turning to militia or insurgent groups, many of which are suspected of paying men to carry out attacks.

"Only barely second to security in my neighborhood is employment, and so I've got to find a way to make that bridge," said Lt. Col. Jack Marr, commander of the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment. Instead of having Iraqis "out there with guns ... I hand them a shovel and get them digging up trash."

Each person hired will receive a salary of \$300 a month, the same amount as members of the mainly Sunni armed groups known as Awakening Councils who now protect their neighborhoods with the help of American and Iraqi forces.

The Awakening Councils — 70,000-strong and growing fast — have contributed to a 60 percent decrease in violence across Iraq since June, along with a six-month cease-fire called in August by Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr for his Mahdi Army militia and an extra 30,000 U.S. troops sent into Baghdad.

Horning's region, which

covers about 100 square miles and 12 towns, has both Sunni and Shiite Awakening groups.

With less violence — residents say Huda hasn't been attacked by mortars for three months — people can concentrate on rebuilding their lives.

"Here where security is better, we need the return to normalcy," Horning said. "We're putting dollars into the economy, to get people working. People see that there's hope, that there's an alternative."

But with the project funded by the U.S., what happens when American forces leave?

"If we have a strong area and government, then there will be no problem," insists Sheik Zeidan Hussein Ali al-Masoudi. "The Americans are visitors. We must do something for ourselves. We want to live free. All Iraqis need is for the [foreign] forces to leave as soon as the work is done. ... All Iraqis want this."

On the first day of recruiting in Huda last week, three dozen men lined up outside the dilapidated schoolhouse, their application forms in bright yellow, blue and pink folders rolled in their fists. Some have been out of work for years.

"The people here need money," Sheik Naheth Ouaidi al-Shameri, one of several sheiks who turned out, told the U.S. officer.

Horning said he was looking to recruit about 600 in the area.

Like Awakening Council volunteers, all applicants go through biometric screening — fingerprinting, iris scans, photographs — in an attempt to ensure none is an insurgent or criminal.

Washington Post
January 3, 2008

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10. U.S. Urges Pakistani Steps

Diplomatic Push Stresses

Freedoms, Credibility of Election

By Robin Wright and Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writers

The Bush administration has launched a behind-the-scenes campaign to persuade Pakistan to free democratic activists and lawyers, lift press restrictions and allow international observers into polling stations to ensure that the delayed parliamentary election is deemed credible by Pakistanis and by the international community, according to U.S. officials.

In their first conversation since the assassination of Benazir Bhutto last week, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called President Pervez Musharraf on New Year's Day to discuss the importance of the election next month as a means of restoring stability in a nuclear-armed country that is also on the front line of fighting extremism. Other U.S. officials and diplomats in Islamabad are engaged in an intense diplomatic push this week, officials said.

"What the Pakistani government and Pakistani officials need to do now is to make the best use of that time between now and February 18 ... to make sure that independent media is able to operate, to make sure that those who want to peacefully participate in the political process can do so, that any restrictions on political parties are lifted," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said yesterday.

"You need to allow those candidates and those who are legitimate participants in the political process to access that free media, and to make sure that you have the most free, fair and transparent electoral process in the run-up to the election, on Election Day, as well as after Election Day, as votes are being counted," he said.

U.S. officials say they are trying to capitalize on the

shock of Bhutto's assassination last Thursday and the growing threat of instability to pressure Musharraf to take steps he has resisted for months.

The new U.S. push comes amid growing calls for Musharraf to step aside because an election will no longer be enough to stabilize Pakistan. A report by the International Crisis Group, a nonpartisan international monitoring group, warned yesterday that Pakistan's moderate majority is unlikely to settle for anything less than genuine parliamentary democracy without the controversial former general.

"Stability in Pakistan and its contribution to wider anti-terror efforts now require rapid transition to legitimate civilian government," the ICG concluded. "This must involve the departure of Musharraf, whose continued efforts to retain power at all costs are incompatible with national reconciliation."

Musharraf has placed his political future and the regime's survival ahead of all other Pakistani interests, the report warns, thus generating a showdown with the moderate center that could threaten the federation's ability to hold together.

U.S. officials acknowledge that the next six weeks are critical in determining whether Pakistanis can move beyond the loss of the leader of the largest opposition movement. Washington is also pushing Islamabad to reform the election commission so it is no longer seen as a Musharraf prop and to allow exit polling as a way to help verify voting trends with the government count, U.S. officials said.

The International Republican Institute, a democracy advocacy group, pulled out of monitoring the election because of unusual restrictions placed on monitoring groups by the Pakistani government and because of security concerns. Pakistan denied the IRI

permission to conduct an exit poll and demanded notification of polling places to be visited. It also issued a 150-page manual with restrictions on observers that made it all but impossible to issue a credible report on the elections, said Lorne W. Craner, IRI president and assistant secretary of state for democracy until 2004.

"We have observed 140 elections over the last 20 years, and we have not encountered anything like that before," he said. The State Department wants the IRI to reconsider, but it is still undecided, Craner said.

Experts say the United States has an opportunity to help Pakistan salvage an election process that was badly discredited even before Bhutto's assassination.

"The next six weeks give the U.S. a new lease on life in terms of pressing Pakistan to take some of the steps we've wanted them to take for the last year," said Daniel Markey, a Council on Foreign Relations fellow who served at the State Department until a year ago. "But the U.S. needs to do more."

After Bhutto's death dramatically altered Pakistani politics, Musharraf will be under far greater scrutiny, with growing public expectations that a victory for opposition forces is the only credible outcome of a fair election, said Xenia Dormandy, a former White House adviser on South Asia now at Harvard's Belfer Center. "Perception is reality," Dormandy said. "Even if Musharraf won fairly, no one will believe it. He's in a very tough spot."

Washington Post
January 3, 2008
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11. U.K. To Help Pakistan Investigate Bhutto Case

Legislative Elections Delayed to Feb. 18

By Griff Witte, Washington

Post Foreign Service

KARACHI, Pakistan, Jan. 2 -- A team of Scotland Yard investigators will probe the killing of Benazir Bhutto, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf announced in a nationwide address Wednesday night. Musharraf also defended the postponement of parliamentary elections until Feb. 18, a decision that opposition parties condemned but said they would grudgingly accept.

The admission that the Pakistani government needs outside help in its investigation came amid a domestic and international uproar over the way police officials have handled the case.

Authorities have come under intense criticism for hosing down the crime scene within minutes of last Thursday's gun-and-bomb attack against Bhutto, a former two-term prime minister. Critics have also said the government erred by announcing that, rather than being killed in gunfire, Bhutto died after the force of the bombing caused her head to slam against the lever of her vehicle's sunroof.

It is unclear how much the Scotland Yard investigators, who are expected in Pakistan this weekend, can accomplish given that much of the evidence has been destroyed. The team will be small and will consist only of officers from Scotland Yard's Counter Terrorism Command.

The controversy about exactly how Bhutto died has contributed to deep suspicion over who carried out the attack. Musharraf said Wednesday that he had no doubt Islamic extremists were behind Bhutto's murder. He sought to soothe her enraged supporters -- many of whom blame him and his allies for her death -- by asserting that he and Bhutto had the same goals.

"Benazir Bhutto wanted democracy and wanted to fight against terrorism, and these are exactly my wishes," Musharraf

said.

U.S. officials in Washington welcomed Musharraf's plans to bring in the British investigators, but Bhutto's party said it was not satisfied, and it continued to press for a U.N.-led inquiry.

"The regime has lost all credibility," the Pakistan People's Party said in a statement. "Neither a domestic inquiry nor vague foreign involvement when all traces of evidence have been systematically destroyed would lay to rest the lingering doubts and suspicions."

The party pointed to a letter Bhutto wrote Musharraf in October in which she named several people with past or current connections to the government who she said were trying to kill her.

"If it indeed was the job of terrorists, then these terrorists have already been identified in Mohtarma Bhutto's letter," the party said, using an honorific.

Musharraf's acceptance of British investigators came on the same day that the Election Commission of Pakistan said voting scheduled for Tuesday will instead take place Feb. 18.

The delay, the commission said, was unavoidable because of damage sustained in riots last week following Bhutto's death. The rioting was especially severe in Sindh province, Bhutto's home region, where mobs ransacked several Election Commission offices.

"It was inevitable, and the decision of delaying the election is quite right," said Musharraf, whose party backed the delay.

Opposition parties had strongly opposed it, in the belief that an election next week would allow them to better capitalize on sympathy for Bhutto and on a strong backlash against the government.

Independent elections experts, too, had pushed for the vote to be held Tuesday. The pretext for delaying, they said, was flimsy because the

logistical hurdles could have been overcome.

"The reasons given by the Election Commission do not seem very convincing," said Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, who heads the Pakistan Institute for Legislative Development and Transparency. "The commission will now seem even more partisan than it did before this decision."

Asif Ali Zardari, Bhutto's widower and the interim leader of the Pakistan People's Party, said at a news conference Wednesday night that he would not call supporters to the streets in protest. The move seemed to reflect concerns that political agitation could lead to more violence.

"We ask people to be peaceful and to show their anger at the ballot box," Zardari said.

Opposition parties have been arguing for months that Musharraf's allies plan to rig the polls. Bhutto, who was seeking to win back her old job as prime minister, had been making the claim regularly. On Wednesday opposition leaders said the delay was one more attempt by the government to dictate the outcome of Pakistan's first national elections in more than five years.

"This is yet more proof that Musharraf cannot stick to his word and hold the election," said Ahsan Iqbal, spokesman for the Pakistan Muslim League-N, the party led by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. "Musharraf must step down."

The president said in his address Wednesday night that he wants "free, fair, transparent and peaceful elections" for the country. To help achieve that goal, he announced that army and paramilitary troops that had been deployed in many areas last week to quell the rioting would remain in place at least until the election, and perhaps afterward.

Pakistan is going through one of the most tumultuous periods in its 60-year history.

Frequent attacks in recent months have led to widespread fear, as well as disillusionment.

At a bustling market in Lahore selling pirated DVDs, where a Hollywood film about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy had sold out after the killing of Bhutto, one shop owner said he expected more trouble.

"I tell my family, these next few days in Pakistan will be important," said Mian Maqsood, 50. "If we can keep the violence 100 percent out, maybe we have a chance. But I am not sure that will be the case."

Correspondent Emily Wax in Lahore and special correspondents Imtiaz Ali in Peshawar and Karla Adam in London contributed to this report.

Wall Street Journal
January 3, 2008
Pg. 9

12. Is Pakistan Pivotal For Al Qaeda?

Islamist Group's Losses Elsewhere Raise Its Stake in South Asian Strife

By Jay Solomon and Siobhan Gorman

The current chaos in Pakistan could turn into a defining moment in the fight against Islamist extremism.

Al Qaeda-linked groups have been surging across the country, feeding fears in Washington of a prolonged offensive against Islamabad's secular establishment. At the same time, the U.S. and its allies have notched a string of wins against militant groups in Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

This conflicting dynamic leads many U.S. strategists to argue that what happens in Pakistan this year could be pivotal: If al Qaeda and other militant Islamist groups gain a greater toehold, the terrorist network will have its strongest base of operations since the Taliban ruled Afghanistan in the late 1990s. But having been backed into a corner in other

parts of the world, losses in Pakistan could be a major blow, these officials say.

In Iraq, the Pentagon, working with Sunni tribes, has largely forced the group al Qaeda in Iraq -- which has declared itself to be a unit of al Qaeda -- out of its onetime stronghold in western Anbar province. American allies, often with U.S. assistance, have significantly weakened terrorist groups operating in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Just a few years ago, terrorism experts were predicting al Qaeda's ideology could solidify major bases in these countries.

The U.S. has "had a number of significant tactical successes, but in the aggregate, they haven't yet affected the strategic balance," said Bruce Hoffman, a counterterrorism expert at Georgetown University in Washington. He said that as al Qaeda has suffered losses in Iraq, it has shifted "the center of gravity" of its struggle to South Asia.

Last week, Pakistan's government accused al Qaeda of overseeing the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Dec. 27. Intelligence officials in Washington and London are still scrutinizing this charge, with some weighing the possible involvement of Islamabad's own intelligence service or some purely homegrown Pakistani militant groups. But U.S. intelligence analysts are increasingly concentrating their attention on a Pakistani militant with ties to al Qaeda, Baitullah Mehsud, according to a U.S. counterterrorism official.

U.S. officials have been watching with growing alarm what they say is the spread of the Taliban and other Islamist groups linked to al Qaeda across Pakistan. They note that a few years ago, these organizations were largely confined to the remote tribal regions along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

But now they're pushing east and building support in major Pakistani cities.

The fear now is that al Qaeda and its allies will expand their influence as the country faces instability fueled by Ms. Bhutto's death. Counterterrorism experts say they expect more attacks on secular Pakistani politicians and military leaders as militants seek to expand the power vacuum. Experts note that al Qaeda's No. 2 commander, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has repeatedly exhorted Pakistanis in recent months to overthrow President Pervez Musharraf's military government.

"In order for Pakistan to marginalize the extremists, you need to have a compelling leadership who can marshal the forces," said Robert Grenier, the Central Intelligence Agency's Islamabad station chief from 1999 to 2002. "Musharraf can no longer do it."

Pakistan's deteriorating situation has fueled calls for radical solutions. One theory among some counterterrorism officials says U.S. forces should now directly engage al Qaeda and Taliban militants operating inside Pakistan. Previously, policy makers worried such a move would undermine Mr. Musharraf; his weakened state diminishes such fears. Most Pakistan experts believe this would only further radicalize the country's population.

U.S. counterterrorism officials, conversely, are seeking to learn from successes Washington has achieved in other places. In Iraq, the Pentagon succeeded in wooing tribal leaders away from al Qaeda by offering economic and political incentives, and by exploiting ideological differences.

In Saudi Arabia, U.S. officials are lauding a government strategy that has directly targeted senior al Qaeda leaders while also working to rehabilitate

lower-ranking members of militant groups. The Saudi government recently released hundreds of onetime fighters from prison who had gone through the program. U.S. officials believe it has significantly reduced the threat of terrorism inside Saudi Arabia, though they still worry it is being exported into countries such as Iraq.

"The Saudi program is about the best program in existence today," said Dell Dailey, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism.

In Lebanon, too, U.S. allies weakened the Fatah al Islam militia that led a mutiny in a northern Palestinian refugee camp. The Lebanese army fought the militia with light arms and logistical support provided by the Pentagon and Arab allies.

Washington and Islamabad have arrested hundreds of top al Qaeda figures in Pakistan since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist strikes, but have failed to damp a broader growth of radical Islamist ideology among the local population, according to current and former U.S. officials. This campaign has been undercut by a failure by the U.S. to develop effective allies in the tribal regions, say former counterterrorism officials who have worked in the region.

In the coming months, these officials say, the U.S. needs to find common cause with tribal leaders who could prove willing to break with al Qaeda, as they have in Iraq. These tribal chiefs could also assist Washington in dispensing \$750 million that the State Department has earmarked for economic development in the tribal areas.

"The way for the central government and for the U.S. to deal with it is to figure out a way to co-opt these guys," said Frank Anderson, who was the CIA's Near East Division chief from 1991 to 1994.

Philadelphia Inquirer
January 3, 2008

13. NATO General Vows To Intensify Afghan Drug Fight

By Jason Straziuso, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan - The U.S. general in charge of NATO's Afghanistan mission said yesterday that he expected another year of "explosive growth" in the country's poppy fields, a harvest that extremists will turn into weapons for use against Afghan and NATO troops.

Gen. Dan McNeill said NATO commanders in Europe had told him to step up the counternarcotics fight this year, "and I will."

"The money associated with poppy and opiate production continues to appear to be very good," McNeill told a news conference. "So without pressure or incentives or dissuasion to keep people from growing it, I expect the amount grown next year to increase."

After a record haul in 2006, Afghan farmers increased opium production about 34 percent in 2007. Afghanistan last year produced 93 percent of the world's opium, the main ingredient in heroin. Its export value was estimated at \$4 billion.

McNeill, the commander of the 39-nation International Security Assistance Force, estimated that insurgents get 20 percent to 40 percent of their income from drugs, but he said some U.N. officials had told him the number could be as high as 60 percent.

"So when I see a poppy field, I see it turning into money that turns into [weapons] that are used to kill Afghans and members of the International Security Assistance Force," McNeill said.

He said that Afghanistan's record opium crop last year was due in part to the abundant rains Afghanistan received. He said the country expected more good rainfall this year.

NATO's leaders in Brussels have made clear, McNeill said, that he is to use the current ISAF mandate to its fullest extent "to help the people of Afghanistan rid themselves of this scourge."

He made clear that NATO would not be involved in eradication of poppies from fields but that it could bear down on drug growers and dealers connected to the insurgency.

Links between drug growers and insurgents have been thought to be expanding in recent years. Proof of that came when Afghan and NATO forces last month recaptured from militants the town of Musa Qala in Helmand province, the world's largest poppy-growing region.

They discovered dozens of heroin labs and stockpiles of drugs worth \$500 million in street value, according to U.S. Ambassador William Wood.

Financial Times
January 3, 2008

14. US General Warns On Afghan Defence Plan

By Jon Boone, Kabul

British plans to equip tribes to defend their villages against the Taliban will not work in the region of Afghanistan in which UK forces are responsible, the top US general commanding Nato forces in the country warned on Wednesday.

With overstretched international and Afghan security forces struggling to contain the country's insurgency, some countries, including the UK and Denmark, are pushing for greater use of tribal militias to strengthen efforts against Taliban and al-Qaeda forces.

Last month Gordon Brown, British prime minister, said the UK, which has responsibility for the southern province of Helmand, would increase its support for "community defence

initiatives, where local volunteers are recruited to defend homes and families modelled on traditional Afghan *arbakai*".

But General Dan McNeill, commander of the International Security and Assistance Force, on Wednesday said the model would be effective only in the south-east, and not in Helmand, the province where UK troops are located. "My information, from studying Afghan history, is that *arbakai* works only in Paktia, Khost and the southern portion of Paktika and it's not likely to work beyond those geographic locations," he said.

Gen McNeill said although there was a role for "local security solutions", care had to be taken not to fuel inter-tribal fighting.

"What we should not do is take actions that will reintroduce militias of the former power brokers. There has been some good work here to get those things back in the box and we shouldn't seek to go back there."

British interest in community defence initiatives has been prompted by the difficulty of quelling the insurgency in Helmand and by frustration with the quality of Afghanistan's police force, which is being retrained.

The tribal militia plans have appalled some analysts who say that any attempt to provide tribes with weaponry will further undermine a disarmament process that is already criticised for being ineffective.

Ehsan Zahine, director of the Tribal Liaison Office in Kabul, said it was unlikely that a 200-year-old *arbakai* system would be effective even in the three south-eastern provinces where it has traditionally held sway.

"In a place like Khost it will be very hard to persuade villages to fight for a government which they regard as abusive. Two years ago our proposal to use *arbakai* in the south-east was rejected. Now

's unlikely the tribes would be willing to fight for a government they no longer trust."

Jelani Popal, the head of the recently created Independent Directorate for Local Administration, is promoting the use of "community self-defence forces" but he told the FT they would have to be relatively formal bodies more akin to a locally recruited police force. In many cases, such local forces would not even be armed.

He said he had come under strong pressure from one of the foreign missions in Kabul to agree to non-uniformed "loose militias".

"I did not agree to that, we do not want to create *mujahdeen* groups when we have worked so hard on national disarmament."

Mr Popal said his proposal was similar to the ill-fated auxiliary police scheme introduced in 2006.

"It was a good idea, but it was badly implemented. Not enough attention was paid to recruitment – people just went to warlords to get 60 people or so. Many of them were drug addicts or criminals, or related to the warlord. We will ensure the community defence forces are properly screened and trained."

An official at the British embassy in Kabul said the UK was not planning to exactly replicate the *arbakai* outside the south-eastern border lands. Proposals were being worked out for a small-scale trial of the plan.

Last month, a senior UK Ministry of Defence official described the *arbakai* as "local defence volunteers" who could perform certain roles in some places in Afghanistan.

The UK was seeking to place more responsibilities for security in Afghan hands, he said. However, the idea was not to create new militias.

Washington Times

January 3, 2008

Pg. 4

15. Pakistanis Fleeing To Afghanistan As Violence Escalates

By Sara A. Carter, Washington Times

Hundreds of Pakistani families have fled into Afghanistan and are staying with friends and relatives in an attempt to escape the growing violence in their own country, U.S. military officials and Afghan leaders said yesterday.

Col. Martin Schweitzer, commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team, told reporters that despite the continued crisis in Pakistan there has not been "a significant threat emerging" in his region.

"There were some — about 300 or 400 families that the governor took in in Khost and did a pretty good program to integrate them back into the communities," said Col. Schweitzer, who was with his unit in eastern Afghanistan's Khost province and spoke to reporters at the Pentagon during a joint video conference with Arsallah Jamal, the governor of Khost province.

Mr. Jamal confirmed that the refugees are staying with Afghan families, and not in refugee camps in Afghanistan. The fleeing families were once refugees in Pakistan, he added.

Col. Schweitzer stated, however, that eastern Afghanistan has seen significant improvements over the past year with a 40 percent decrease in "direct fire" and other threat activities throughout all the eastern districts and a 70 percent decrease in Khost.

"Khost was a more secure and safe place to live compared with 2006 and the years before," Col. Schweitzer said.

He added that in 2007, the once violence-racked Khost province had received six times more funding for development and assisting its residents than in the past.

Those improvements and the current strides in local

government have created a chain reaction, where citizens in the province are seeking more "help and assistance," leading to enhanced Afghan leadership and Afghan ownership, he said.

"Both the coalition and Afghan security forces and civil administration worked towards better understanding, coordination, cooperation, which reduced civilian casualties in the provinces," Col. Schweitzer said.

He added that the current improvements in Afghanistan are significant compared with 2002, when "Afghanistan had no president, no parliament, no ministries, one Afghan battalion, no police, no border police, two provincial governors out of 34, and no district governors."

This week, however, roadside bombs and fighting lead to the deaths of 19 persons, including 14 Taliban fighters, officials said yesterday. Also, eight suspected Taliban fighters were killed Tuesday in southern Afghanistan, and a roadside bomb in Khost province killed two Afghan security guards working for a U.S. military base, the Afghan Defense Ministry said.

Despite improvements made in Afghanistan, more than 6,500 people were killed in fighting in the region, according to an Associated Press count, which is based on figures from Western and Afghan officials.

Los Angeles Times
January 3, 2008

16. 21 Slain In Afghanistan Violence

By Associated Press

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN —Roadside bombs and military operations in Afghanistan killed 21 people, including a coalition soldier and 14 Taliban fighters, officials said Wednesday.

A roadside bomb hit a U.S.-led coalition vehicle in the eastern province of

Khowst, killing a soldier and an Afghan interpreter, the coalition said. The soldier's nationality was not released, but most troops in the east are American. Two other soldiers were wounded.

A roadside bomb elsewhere in the province killed two Afghan security guards working for a U.S. military base, the Defense Ministry said.

Police in Khowst killed a would-be suicide bomber trying to enter a police checkpoint with hand grenades Tuesday, said Wazir Pacha, a spokesman for Khowst's provincial police chief.

In the southern province of Helmand, Afghan and foreign troops killed eight suspected Taliban fighters Tuesday in the Musa Qala area, the Defense Ministry said.

Five other militants were killed in separate incidents when roadside bombs they were planting exploded prematurely, it said, and Taliban militants killed an Afghan army officer and wounded another.

A roadside bomb in the south killed two border policemen in Kandahar province, said Gen. Abdul Razik.

Afghanistan saw a record level of violence in 2007, with more than 6,500 people killed, according to an Associated Press count based on figures from Western and Afghan officials.

Some of the worst violence took place in Helmand, the world's largest poppy-growing region.

USA Today
January 3, 2008

Pg. 1

Troops at Risk -- IEDs in Iraq

17. Army Helmets To Gather Blast Data

Sensors designed to gauge effects of roadside bombs in Afghanistan

By Tom Vanden Brook, USA Today

WASHINGTON — The Army is sending soldiers to Afghanistan with high-tech helmets to gather data on the effect of bomb blasts on their brains.

The Army's Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier has outfitted the helmets of soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division with sensors to gauge the violent shaking that occurs when improvised explosive devices (IEDs) blow up near them, said Brig. Gen. Mark Brown, who leads the office.

"It's basically a computer chip in a helmet," Brown said.

So far, 1,145 soldiers have received helmet sensors, according to Debi Dawson, a spokeswoman for PEO Soldier, which is charged with rapidly developing and fielding equipment needed for combat. Soldiers received the sensors last month and will deploy to Afghanistan in the spring.

The device, which will be checked every 30 days, can record 527 events ranging from being dropped on the ground to being blasted by a bomb. The sensor weighs 6 ounces, runs on a battery that can last six months and attaches to the back of the helmet.

To better measure the causes and effects of traumatic brain injury, the Army aims to establish data on what happens to a soldier's head during an IED blast. The sensor is designed to measure the violent pulse of air after an explosion. Energy from this wave, known as overpressure, courses through the body, damaging brain cells and other organs.

The helmet device also can measure acceleration, the jolt soldiers receive from the explosion. It is one of the primary causes of death from an IED because it can snap the neck. The data will be downloaded to establish a database on the effects of blasts. Medical researchers will study the information, which will be applied in the development of safer helmets.

IEDs are the top cause of

brain injuries for U.S. troops. They account for almost 80% of all wounds and are responsible for 60% of those killed.

To better protect troops from IED blasts, the Pentagon set the fielding of new armored vehicles as its top priority in May. Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, which have a raised chassis and V-shaped bottom, deflect the force of roadside bombs.

Troops near IED explosions can suffer perforated eardrums, ringing in the ears, blurred vision, memory lapses and headaches. Congress authorized \$150 million for brain injury research in an emergency spending bill passed in May for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Soldiers often return to combat after initially recovering from a concussion, or a bruising of the brain. Recent research shows that such blasts can cause damage deep inside the brain, and the symptoms may remain hidden for years.

"When medical science does mature, they'll already have a big baseline of data," Brown said of the information expected to be collected from the helmet sensors.

"The helmet just a few years ago was a steel pot," he said.

Houston Chronicle
January 3, 2008

18. Army To Review KBR Contract

By Donna Borak, Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Army will revisit its decision to award three \$5 billion contracts to KBR, DynCorp International and Fluor Corp., a federal watchdog agency said Wednesday. KBR is based in Houston.

The bundled contracts, considered to be one of the largest deals awarded by the Army, could be worth up to \$150 billion if the Pentagon extends the deal on a yearly

basis over a 10-year span. In June, the Army chose the three companies to provide food and shelter to U.S. troops in Iraq.

The pact has been on hold since July, after two private companies filed separate protests with the Government Accountability Office.

In October, the GAO backed the protests filed by Cape Canaveral, Fla.-based IAP Worldwide Services and Newville, Pa.-based Contingency Management Group.

The Army is re-evaluating new bids from the companies but has not set a selection date, said Linda Theis, a spokeswoman for the Army Sustainment Command.

Heather Browne, a spokeswoman for KBR, said the company expects the decision in the first quarter of 2008.

USA Today
January 3, 2008
Pg. 3

19. No Pendleton Marines Killed In War In Nov., Dec.

'Things are getting better' in Iraq, Afghanistan, troops say
By William M. Welch, USA Today

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — For almost two years, this Marine base in Southern California has had fighters fall every month in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The fallen are remembered in memorial services here every time a unit returns from fighting abroad. This holiday season, Camp Pendleton Marines were spared the ultimate sacrifice.

No Marines based here died in fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan in December or November — the first time a month has gone by without a death since March 2006, according to Department of Defense casualty figures analyzed by USA TODAY.

"I look at it as good news," says Staff Sgt. Johnathan

Turner, 33, of Atlanta, a veteran of three tours of duty in Iraq. "It means things are getting better over there."

Pendleton has suffered some of the military's highest casualty figures in the Iraq war, and there hadn't been consecutive death-free months for Pendleton's troops since early 2004.

The decline in casualties is reflected as well in the experience of Marines based at Camp Lejeune near Jacksonville, N.C., where December was the third consecutive month without an Iraq fatality, according to the figures.

October was the first death-free month for Lejeune Marines since June 2004.

The declines coincide with reports of progress in securing the country during the fifth year of the war in Iraq and follow the increase in troop levels, or "surge" as the Pentagon and Bush administration labeled it.

Marines say they see improvement in Iraq security.

"Every time I went, I've seen progress. ... It's always changing," said Sgt. Justin Imbeau, 23, of Tulsa, who has spent 28 months in Iraq over three deployments, including the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The news of a break in casualties was tempered by past losses for some Marines as the war grinds on.

Sgt. Seth Martin, 24, who returned from Iraq in October, said Marines think about casualties in terms of the faces of friends and fellow fighters, not statistics.

"It's not so much the numbers as who I know," says Martin of Corcoran, Calif. "Late in August, a buddy of mine passed away, and another is still in the hospital."

"While you are there, it doesn't really hit home until somebody you know gets hit."

Progress hasn't lessened the strain on families back home, these Marines say. They try not to dwell on the risks or

casualties when they talk to loved ones.

"Nothing long and drawn out — just quick and to the point," said Turner, describing conversations with family members. He also cited the death of close friends serving in Iraq.

Imbeau, Martin and Turner are part of the 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion at Pendleton.

Imbeau suffered shrapnel wounds from a 155mm artillery round while he was on foot patrol in Iraq. The incident left him with a broken jaw and nose and a perforated eardrum. He spent a month recovering and returned to his fighting position without leaving the country.

"Once it happens to you, you realize how quickly and easily it can happen," Imbeau says of the injury. He has a wife and 6-year-old daughter.

He says he was most heartened by seeing Iraqis vote in elections — a scene that made him feel that he and his fellow Marines had made a difference in the lives of the local population. He says Marines don't think about political debate at home over the war.

"I never have sat down and questioned why I'm there," he said. "I never doubted why we are here. I saw my mission, went and done it, and when it's over, I come home."

Pendleton has had 335 Marines die in Iraq since the war started, including 37 killed in 2007. That compares with 49 deaths in 2006, 39 deaths in 2005, 178 deaths in 2004 and 32 deaths in 2003, according to the Pentagon's figures.

ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq — On a clear, cool December morning, two odd-looking military aircraft zip along 8,000 feet above the empty desert of western Iraq, preparing to perform a feat worthy of science fiction.

As the V-22 Ospreys approach their dusty destination, a lonely Marine Corps outpost near the Syrian border, each craft's huge wingtip rotors, now serving as propellers, will steadily tilt upward — and in effect turn the two airplanes into helicopters to land.

Over the past three months, the Osprey's trick of transforming itself has become an everyday sight over Anbar province, where 10 of the Texas-built tiltrotor transports have been flying in a combat zone for the first time in the V-22's tumultuous 24-year history.

So far, the Osprey has defied the dire predictions of its most severe critics. Citing the V-22's record of four crashes and 30 deaths in test flights prior to 2001, some foes of the tiltrotor forecast more crashes and deaths in Iraq.

As of Dec. 28, three months through a scheduled seven-month deployment, the 23 pilots of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 263, known as VMM-263, had logged 1,639 hours of flight time in Iraq, carried 6,826 passengers and delivered 631,837 pounds of cargo without a mishap or even a close call.

That's good news not only for the Marines but also for Bell Helicopter Textron Inc. of Fort Worth and Boeing Co.'s helicopter division, near Philadelphia, which make the Osprey in a 50-50 partnership. About 2,500 Bell employees work on the Osprey in Fort Worth and Amarillo, where V-22s are assembled.

The Marines plan to buy 360 Ospreys in all. The Air Force is set to purchase 50 and may buy more, for special operations. The companies hope to sell dozens more to the

Navy and potential foreign customers as well. An unsuccessful first V-22 deployment could torpedo those sales.

Headquartered at Asad, an isolated air base in the desert about 110 miles west of Baghdad, VMM-263's Ospreys spent their first two months in Iraq largely flying "general support" missions — hauling troops and supplies to and from forward operating bases.

"As long as they keep using it like a truck, I think they'll probably be OK," said Philip Coyle, a former Pentagon weapons testing director and a longtime Osprey critic.

In December, VMM-263 began to take on riskier tasks.

On Dec. 6, two of the Ospreys carried 24 combat-loaded Marines and 24 Iraqi troops on a raid near Lake Tharthar, 150 miles north of Baghdad, to look for suspected insurgents.

"It turned out to be a dry hole, there was nothing there," said Capt. Drew Norris, 30, of Dallas, a graduate of Jesuit College Preparatory School and Texas A&M University who was one of the pilots on the raid. As for the flight, he said, "It went off without a hitch."

Two days later, two Ospreys were included for the first time in a well-established mission called "aeroscout," a sort of roving raid in which troops aboard helicopters search for insurgents by air. The ground troops commander scrubbed the mission when one Osprey needed to turn back to base because one of its four generators failed.

The generator failure is symptomatic of one big question hanging over the Osprey in Iraq: Is the \$70 million aircraft reliable enough, or does it break too often?

One of the squadron's 10 Ospreys had to land in Jordan on the way into Iraq in October and spend a couple of days there being fixed after a wiring

problem led the pilots to make a precautionary landing. Others have been grounded for days at a time for similar problems in Iraq.

"That's the kind of thing that has plagued the Osprey, reliability failures of one kind or another," Mr. Coyle said.

VMM-263 brought 14 contractor technicians with them to help deal with such problems, and the Marine Corps and contractors have taken pains to make sure the squadron gets all the parts it needs.

The squadron's readiness rate in Iraq — how many aircraft are ready to fly — has varied from as low as 50 percent to 100 percent on a given day, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Carlos Rios, maintenance material control chief. But the key question is whether enough aircraft are available for the missions that the squadron is assigned, he said.

Lt. Col. Paul Rock, commander of VMM-263, said his squadron had been forced to turn down taskings for lack of aircraft only "one or two days" during its first two months in Iraq.

In addition to flying troops and supplies, meanwhile, the Ospreys have become a favorite way to fly for VIPs, such as generals who need a fast way to get to the Marines' forward operating bases, which have no runways. Anbar is roughly the size of South Carolina.

The Osprey can take off and land like a helicopter but tilts its rotors all the way forward to fly like an airplane. That lets it fly more than twice as fast and far as the CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters that the Marines are looking to replace. It cruises thousands of feet higher than helicopters.

The debate over the V-22 is far from over, though, in part because while the Osprey is flying in a combat zone, there isn't much actual combat in that zone these days.

When the Marines decided

Dallas Morning News
January 3, 2008

20. Marines Put Bell Helicopter's Osprey To Test In Iraq

Marines put criticized aircraft to test in Iraq; Fort Worth maker could gain

By Richard Whittle, Special Correspondent

to send the Osprey to Iraq, Anbar was the hotbed of the Sunni Muslim insurgency that racked Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion of 2003. By the time the squadron arrived in October, Sunni rebels had turned against the jihadists affiliated with al-Qaeda and have been helping rather than attacking U.S. forces.

Through mid-December, none of VMM-263's pilots had reported any evidence of being shot at, though some had seen tracer rounds well below them while flying at night.

Under the circumstances, some critics might say that the Osprey isn't really being tested, but "people are too impatient," said V-22 advocate Loren Thompson, a defense analyst with the Lexington Institute, a Washington think tank with close ties to the defense industry.

"The kind of harrowing operations that people anticipated haven't occurred so far, but what we're learning about the V-22 in Iraq is that it can operate every day, it can perform a wide range of missions, and – at least so far – it does not have deficient reliability," he said. "However, there's a long way to go before we grasp the potential of this aircraft. This is just the beginning."

Richard Whittle is a freelance journalist based in Chevy Chase, Md., who covers military affairs for The Dallas Morning News. He is writing a book about the V-22 Osprey for Simon & Schuster.

Government Executive
January 1, 2008

21. Freedom To Manage

Under the new Defense personnel system, the cost of liberty is high.

By Brittany Ballenstedt

When the Defense Department began moving its civilian workforce to a new personnel system almost two years ago, Pat Tamburrino knew managers would have their hands full. Many had little

experience writing measurable job objectives or linking pay raises to performance.

Tamburrino was the executive director of one of the first organizations to convert to the National Security Personnel System - the Naval Sea Systems Command - which moved to NSPS in April 2006. Tamburrino expected that the new system would force him to spend much more time training and coaching employees. After all, it had been just two years since Congress had granted Defense the authority to create a brand new human resources system in the hope of empowering managers and enabling a more effective response to terrorism.

Under the old system, "performance reviews were of no value to the employee because they were done without any conscience," says Tamburrino, who is now an assistant deputy chief in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. "Managers didn't spend a lot of time setting objectives, and [employees] didn't get a lot of feedback from their bosses during the course of the year."

Recognizing such deficiencies, Defense has been moving employees into the system in waves, known as spirals, and training them and their bosses at every turn. So far, more than 110,000 white-collar civilian employees have transferred to NSPS; it's planned to eventually cover 700,000.

With a focus on flexibility, the system enables the department to link pay raises more closely to job performance and to move employees between jobs without competition or piles of paperwork. But above all, it seeks to increase managers' room to maneuver - a benefit that comes with significant cost.

Time and Training

So far, managers say, NSPS is requiring them to spend much more time coaching and rating employees.

"It's not a simple system to implement," Tamburrino says. "You have to do a lot of training and coaching, and you have to invest a lot of time."

As a result, Tamburrino says he was telling first-line supervisors to anticipate spending 40 to 60 hours per employee in the first year of NSPS. But the amount of time devoted to managerial duties won't necessarily taper off once managers become more accustomed to the system. After all, if they are engaging in effective conversations with employees at least four times per year, he says, 40 to 60 hours is not unrealistic.

His assessment is consistent with Office of Personnel Management standards, which hold that all managers should spend at least 25 percent of their time performing supervisory duties. "That's two hours out of every eight coaching, mentoring, setting priorities and giving feedback," Tamburrino says. "It takes time."

According to Rachel Dondero, director of the Navy's executive personnel division, NSPS should be a large drain only for managers who weren't doing their duty before it. "We really are now doing what we should have been doing all along," she says.

Many managers agree that their greatest challenge is working with employees to craft performance objectives, keeping in mind that evaluations and pay increases hang on how well they meet those goals. Tamburrino says another challenge also comes into play during the rating process - many employees shy from boasting about their accomplishments.

"People don't like to brag about themselves, and as part of NSPS, when employees write their self-appraisals, they have to say 'I really did good stuff,'" Tamburrino says. "To get people to think about themselves like that is hard." Once employees grow accustomed to touting their

work, managers must then disabuse them of the notion that high performance ratings will remain stellar from year to year. "Some years are boom years, and some are just normal years," Tamburrino says. "That's another thing we've had to convince people of; once you're [rated] a five, you're not always a five. That's a hard conversation to have with folks."

The managerial workload is heavy for high and low performers alike, says Darryl Perkinson, national president of the Federal Managers Association and a supervisory training specialist at Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Va.

Each employee requires the same amount of attention and review. "Documentation is key to supporting those people you feel should get a little above and beyond the average pay raise," says Perkinson, who will move to NSPS in February. "But to be consistent, you have to put that level of effort forth for everyone." He says he looks forward to setting mutual job objectives with those he manages: "Everyone will know what the game plan is and where we're going."

Elizabeth Waldron-Topp, president of FMA Chapter 104 in California, also is a fan of pay for performance. She came to her post as a transportation-logistics manager at Edwards Air Force Base under the Defense acquisition demonstration project, which began in 1998 as part of a series of endeavors testing pay and personnel flexibility. In early 2007, she moved to NSPS. "I know from a personal standpoint, if we weren't under a pay-for-performance system, I wouldn't be working for the government," Waldron-Topp says. "I work very hard, and I want to be rewarded for those efforts."

Other managers aren't as open to NSPS. Some contend that the extra work required to

grant employees relatively small sums of money isn't worth it. "Through everything that I've seen in class and have done, I've realized that the only thing that NSPS is doing is saving the government money," says a manager who requested anonymity. "It generates more anger and frustration than any motivation." Some also complain that it's expecting too much to force them to manage under NSPS along with older personnel systems. "We have a portion of employees under NSPS and all of our wage-grade employees under the old system," says another manager who requested anonymity. "It's unjust for the department to put us through that."

Waldron-Topp, who manages employees under four different pay systems, says juggling all the rules is difficult, but it hasn't altered her favorable view of NSPS. "What makes it so difficult is you can't be an expert in all the systems," she says. "But if everyone comes under the same pay system, it's going to be awesome."

Getting SMART

Defense has taken a two-tiered approach to training managers: One focuses on "soft" skills, such as communicating with and coaching employees, and the other keys in on technical and functional capabilities, according to Mary Lacey, program executive officer for NSPS. "Many of our supervisors have allowed their [soft] skills to get rusty over the years," she says. "We've had to focus some energy on getting them back into their prime."

Training soft skills is more difficult, and requires face-to-face interaction, Lacey says. Thus, Defense is delivering it in the classroom. "Training soft skills generally is not done well on the Web," she says. "It usually requires the high-touch approach." Conversely, training in

technical and functional skills is Web-based. It includes an introduction and explanation of NSPS, as well as instruction on developing performance standards and writing self-assessments, Lacey says.

She says Defense has not taken a one-size-fits-all approach to training. Understanding of performance management varies, Lacey says, so she allows organizations to tailor training to fit their needs. "We have some employees coming into NSPS where the only system they've been in their entire life is a performance-based pay system with broad pay bands," she says. "We didn't need to teach them all the basic pieces."

The goal of NSPS is to link performance more closely to mission, but managers must make sure employees' objectives aren't overly burdensome or restrictive, Tamburrino says. Managers learn the SMART rubric for setting employees' goals: simple, measurable, achievable, results-oriented and time-bounded.

While training programs have provided a strong foundation, Waldron-Topp says she has learned more by doing. "I'm seeing that until you go through an entire performance cycle, you really don't understand what you're being trained on," she says.

Meanwhile, to win over employees, Defense has added town hall sessions where they can voice questions or concerns that managers can address. The meetings also help managers assess understanding of the new system. "That's been a hallmark of NSPS: You learn, you evaluate and you adjust," Tamburrino says.

Uncharted Territory

Despite the strong emphasis on training, one key element of NSPS remains uncharted territory - labor relations.

Unions and Defense have been entangled for more than

two years in a legal battle over proposed labor rules. The nine-union coalition leading the fight - the United Defense Workers Coalition - has held that the rules go far beyond the original intent of Congress in creating the new system and limit collective bargaining rights.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia put a halt to the coalition's legal challenge in May, ruling that Defense has the legal authority to limit collective bargaining rights through November 2009. In August, the coalition's request for review of that ruling by the full D.C. Circuit was denied.

The court's ruling left the Pentagon with the authority to bring all its unionized workers into NSPS, but in December, some lawmakers expressed a lack of confidence in certain portions of the system, including labor relations. House and Senate negotiators voted to restore collective bargaining rights, which will require Defense to negotiate many of the core elements of the system. Lacey notes there is some complexity to collective bargaining at Defense, however, largely because the department holds so many bargaining units. "We want the ability to move forward and not have to bargain 1,500 times every once in a while on some things," she says. "There's not a lot to gain in having 1,500 different versions of a system."

But unlike what the Pentagon envisioned for the system, the sweeping changes will place labor relations and employee appeals back under Chapter 71 rules, which govern labor-management relations for federal employees. That means unions can negotiate the same range of issues as elsewhere in government, and Defense employees can appeal major disciplinary actions to the Merit Systems Protection Board, an independent agency that adjudicates disputes

between employees and agencies.

And while the Pentagon is fully willing to bargain under traditional civil service law, there are certain things the department would prefer to negotiate at the national level, Lacey says, giving drug testing policy as an example. Unions say they aren't averse to such an approach and already have submitted proposals for a national-level bargaining strategy. "Our union has never been opposed to national-level bargaining or other similar common-sense reforms," says Richard Brown, president of the National Federation of Federal Employees. The legislation would allow unions and the Pentagon to negotiate certain policies on a national level, while also enabling unions to bargain over the implementation of the system at the local level.

John Gage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, calls the labor changes an "acceptable compromise." AFGE was planning to appeal the D.C. Circuit's ruling to the Supreme Court, but with recent action in Congress, such an appeal will likely be unnecessary. The union has until Jan. 7, 2008, to appeal.

Meanwhile, the new legislation also is likely to hamper the Pentagon's plans for performance-based pay and, more immediately, the 2008 pay increase for NSPS employees. The Defense secretary holds the authority to determine raises, and the Pentagon has announced its intentions to establish a "more robust and credible pay system" in 2008. Thus, NSPS employees have been scheduled to receive 50 percent of the government-wide raise, with the remaining 50 percent linked to performance. Starting in 2009, the Pentagon plans to distribute all raises based on performance.

But the bill requires Defense to make some modifications to that plan,

requiring that NSPS employees receive 60 percent of the annual governmentwide increase that other federal workers receive. The remaining 40 percent would be allocated to the performance pay pools and distributed based on performance. Despite the major changes to the personnel plan, the Pentagon is intent on bringing the majority of its white-collar employees into NSPS, and it might be only a matter of time before the General Schedule is yesterday's news at Defense and perhaps in the rest of government.

Scrapping the General Schedule entirely has been an administration priority. But as President Bush's term winds down, the future of NSPS and overall personnel reform is anything but certain.

Nevertheless, Lacey emphasizes that NSPS is about basic management principles that aren't the province of a single administration or political party. And based on those principles, she says, there's no reason NSPS should not move forward in 2009. "If you go back and take a look at the major interventions in DoD, this is the first that happened under a Republican administration," she says. "It's a management issue, not a political issue, and I would like to think that good management would be valued by any executive."

Salt Lake City Deseret
Morning News
January 2, 2008

22. Pentagon's Efforts To Fight Weapons Of Mass Destruction Flayed

Report cites too little coordination and too little central oversight

By Lee Davidson, Deseret Morning News

The Pentagon's work to combat weapons of mass destruction has been so splintered and uncoordinated that officials cannot be sure

what spending is accomplishing, whether "U.S. interests are protected" or even whether America "can properly respond to attack."

That is according to a Department of Defense Inspector General report, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request by the Deseret Morning News. It was originally classified "For Official Use Only," but the Pentagon provided a declassified copy that censored sensitive information.

The report says that because of its findings, Pentagon officials are now taking steps to improve coordination of work that has been spread among 40 offices and commands.

The report is of special interest to Utah because its Dugway Proving Ground is where many defenses against biological, chemical and radiological weapons — the main weapons of mass destruction — have been tested, sometimes amid controversy about how safe those tests are.

The Inspector General reviewed Pentagon initiatives against weapons of mass destruction and issued a report on March 30 (but the Morning News obtained a copy only this month). It complained that such Pentagon work had too little coordination and too little central oversight.

It warned that "without improved management, DoD (Department of Defense) cannot be assured that planned expenditures of at least \$9.9 billion for Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011 is effectively spent, that U.S. interests are adequately protected, and that DoD can properly respond to an attack."

The report complained that the Pentagon "did not establish a lead office to adequately coordinate its WMD (weapons of mass destruction) initiatives," and instead spread various responsibilities among 40 separate offices and commands. It said those offices

had only limited coordination by a loose working group.

Some of their many responsibilities included developing new defenses against such weapons; finding and seizing any such weapons abroad; assisting former Soviet nations to secure and destroy their stockpiles; and facilitating new counterproliferation treaties.

But the report said the Pentagon "managed each of these initiatives separately and did not coordinate initiatives within the responsible offices, even though all are interrelated."

As a result, it said "senior DoD officials did not receive the necessary information to understand the status of DoD actions for combating WMD."

Inspectors complained that because of splintered responsibilities and lack of coordination, annual Pentagon reports to Congress updating efforts against weapons of mass destruction did not clearly show what was being accomplished with spending.

It said if managers or Congress tried to follow the reports from year to year for 31 specific programs (on which \$917 million was spent in 2003), they could not determine "whether those programs were complete or exactly what was accomplished with the funds."

Among such programs were developing chemical and biological weapon detectors, protective clothing, protective shelters and decontamination systems — some of which have undergone testing at Dugway Proving Ground.

The report said the Pentagon, as recommended by the Inspector General, was taking new action to try to improve coordination. Several offices were appointing lead agencies to coordinate their efforts, and a new coordination committee with more power had been formed.

The report also recommended that more detailed operations plans for

combating weapons of mass destruction be prepared — to allow measuring progress from year to year — and it said several offices and commands concurred with that or said such plans are being refined.

Many of the specifics, and internal debate about them, were blacked out in the censored report provided to the Morning News.

To show the importance of the topic, the report noted that a survey by Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., of experts in June 2005 estimated "a 70 percent chance of a WMD attack somewhere in the world within the next 10 years." The threat is considered increasingly high as terrorist groups have attempted to gain such weapons.

Baltimore Sun
January 3, 2008

23. War Effort Disruption Possible With Base Shift, Pentagon Says

By Timothy B. Wheeler, Sun reporter

Shifting sensitive defense work being done at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey to Aberdeen Proving Ground could disrupt the war effort if the Army fails to replace the many workers who are likely to quit or retire rather than move, the Pentagon acknowledges.

In a report to Congress, Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England writes that officials plan to minimize the upheaval from the base move by relocating its 5,200 workers gradually over the next three years and recruiting military retirees locally to fill the many vacancies expected.

The 15-page report, required by Congress when it approved the nationwide military base realignment in 2005, was submitted last week. It provides a broad outline but few details of how the Defense Department plans to close the 90-year-old New Jersey post

and move its work force to Maryland without a drop-off in its work.

With as many as 70 percent of the Monmouth workers indicating that they will not move to Maryland when their jobs transfer, the report says the Army faces a "significant challenge" in replacing them, in part by training new people for highly technical, often classified work.

The Army plans to hire up to 2,500 employees over the next few years. If it can't get enough to cover the gap, it will look to recruit military retirees - an estimated 14,000 live around Aberdeen - or contract out some of the work.

The Army also has stepped up efforts to hire graduates of colleges in the region, offering them temporary, low-cost housing on base at Monmouth until their jobs are transferred to Maryland.

The report also proposes to offer unspecified retention, recruitment and relocation bonuses to cut down on turnover.

The Army's plans for the move to Aberdeen call for completion of new and renovated laboratories and offices by the 2011 deadline. But the report acknowledges that "some areas of concern still exist" about the likelihood of finishing work in time.

Efforts will be made to line up suitable backup space at other government installations nearby or in private facilities, the report says.

New Jersey officials have complained that the Pentagon understated the costs and disruption of moving Monmouth's work to Aberdeen. Congress has never reversed a base closing once it has been approved.

CQ.com
January 2, 2008

24. House May Attempt Override Of Bush's

Defense Bill Veto

By Kathleen Hunter, CQ Staff

Democratic leaders in Congress dispute President Bush's contention that he has the authority to use a pocket veto to kill the fiscal 2008 defense policy bill and may attempt a veto override later this month.

Both House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., have signaled that they plan to treat Bush's Dec. 28 memorandum of disapproval on the bill (HR 1585) as a normal veto, and have left open the possibility of veto override votes.

"Congress vigorously rejects any claim that the president has the authority to pocket veto this legislation, and will treat any bill returned to the Congress as open to an override vote," a Pelosi aide said Wednesday.

When asked if the House would hold a veto override vote, the aide said, "We are exploring all legislative options and no action has been ruled out."

Reid spokesman Jim Manley also said the legislative branch would interpret Bush's action as a normal veto.

"There was no pocket veto because Congress was available to receive the veto message," Manley said, adding that the Senate would "wait and see what the House does" before determining whether to attempt to override the veto.

Because the bill, which was passed overwhelmingly in both chambers last month, originated in the House, that chamber is required to act first on a veto message from the White House.

Kevin Smith, a spokesman for House Minority Leader John A. Boehner, R-Ohio, declined to comment Wednesday on whether Republicans would support a veto override.

Bush — under intense pressure from the Iraqi government— vetoed the bill over a provision that the White

House contends could have rendered Iraqi assets vulnerable to a freeze by plaintiffs seeking redress in U.S. courts for acts committed under Saddam Hussein's regime.

The Iraqi government had threatened to withdraw \$25 billion worth of assets from U.S. capital markets last week if Bush signed the bill.

The White House, which did not threaten a veto of the bill until after Congress cleared the legislation, contends that Bush had the authority to invoke his constitutional power to pocket veto the bill because the House had adjourned for the year, making it impossible for Bush to return the bill to the chamber that originated it.

"Accordingly, my withholding of approval from the bill precludes its becoming law," Bush stated in his memorandum of disapproval. The pocket veto, the White House says, took effect Dec. 31.

But congressional Democrats dispute that claim.

The Senate has been holding pro forma sessions every few days, and both the House and Senate have empowered their clerks to receive communications from the White House when Congress is out of session.

Also, the adjournment resolution adopted by both chambers (S Con Res 61) would allow House and Senate leaders to call Congress back into session if need be.

The issue has been made even murkier by the fact that the White House also has returned the measure to the House in a procedure that is similar to a regular veto.

In his statement, Bush said he was returning the bill the House "to avoid unnecessary litigation" and to "leave no doubt that the bill is being vetoed."

White House deputy press secretary Scott Stanzel characterized the move as an "extra step ... to make sure that Congress, when it returns in January, can move forward

quickly with a fix to that legislation."

Pelosi's office declined to comment on what specific legislative strategies the House might pursue.

Although the second session of the 110th Congress officially begins Thursday, the House is not slated to return until Jan. 15 and the Senate will not be back until Jan 22.

The disagreement about Bush's nullification of the bill reflects a longstanding dispute between Congress and the White House about exactly when a president can use a pocket veto to kill legislation. Such a veto is not subject to an override vote by either chamber of Congress.

A federal appeals court ruled in 1985 that it is unconstitutional for the president to use the pocket veto between sessions of Congress, but the Supreme Court in January 1987 vacated that decision without addressing the underlying issue. The high court found that the bill in question, which had sought to limit aid to El Salvador as part of an annual appropriations bill, had already expired of its own and the dispute was thus moot.

New York Times
January 3, 2008
Pg. 1

25. Justice Dept. Sets Criminal Inquiry Into C.I.A. Tapes

By Mark Mazzetti and David Johnston

WASHINGTON — Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey said Wednesday that the Justice Department had elevated its inquiry into the destruction of Central Intelligence Agency interrogation videotapes to a formal criminal investigation headed by a career federal prosecutor.

The announcement is the first indication that investigators have concluded on a preliminary basis that

C.I.A. officers, possibly along with other government officials, may have committed criminal acts in their handling of the tapes, which recorded the interrogations in 2002 of two operatives with Al Qaeda and were destroyed in 2005.

C.I.A. officials have for years feared becoming entangled in a criminal investigation involving alleged improprieties in secret counterterrorism programs. Now, the investigation and a probable grand jury inquiry will scrutinize the actions of some of the highest-ranking current and former officials at the agency.

The tapes were never provided to the courts or to the Sept. 11 commission, which had requested all C.I.A. documents related to Qaeda prisoners. The question of whether to destroy the tapes was for nearly three years the subject of deliberations among lawyers at the highest levels of the Bush administration.

Justice Department officials declined to specify what crimes might be under investigation, but government lawyers have said the inquiry will probably focus on whether the destruction of the tapes involved criminal obstruction of justice and related false-statement offenses.

Mr. Mukasey assigned John H. Durham, a veteran federal prosecutor from Connecticut, to lead the criminal inquiry in tandem with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The appointment of a prosecutor from outside Washington was an unusual move, and it suggested that Mr. Mukasey wanted to give the investigation the appearance of an extra measure of independence, after complaints from lawmakers in both parties that Mr. Mukasey's predecessor, Alberto R. Gonzales, had allowed politics to influence the Justice Department's judgment.

Mr. Durham was not appointed as a special counsel in this case, a step sought by

some Congressional Democrats. He will have less expansive authority than a special counsel and will report to the deputy attorney general rather than assume the powers of the attorney general, which he would have had as a special counsel.

Mr. Durham has spent years bringing cases against organized crime figures in Hartford and Boston. In legal circles he has the reputation of a tough, tight-lipped litigator who compiled a stellar track record against the mob.

A C.I.A. spokesman said that the agency would cooperate fully with the Justice Department investigation. Current and former officials have said that the C.I.A. official who ordered the destruction of the tapes in November 2005 was Jose A. Rodriguez Jr., who at the time was the head of the agency's clandestine branch.

The decision to start a full-scale criminal investigation into the matter came four weeks after the disclosure on Dec. 6 that the tapes had been created and then destroyed. The Justice Department and the C.I.A. opened a preliminary inquiry on Dec. 8, and Mr. Mukasey said Wednesday that he had concluded from that review "that there is a basis for initiating a criminal investigation of this matter."

The chairmen of the House Intelligence Committee, Representative Silvestre Reyes, Democrat of Texas, and the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, Democrat of West Virginia, welcomed Mr. Mukasey's announcement. But neither gave any indication he would defer to the criminal inquiry, and in separate statements they pledged to proceed with their committees' investigations into the destruction of the tapes.

John L. Helgerson, the C.I.A. inspector general who took part in the preliminary inquiry, said Wednesday that

he would step aside from the criminal investigation to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest.

Mr. Helgerson's office had reviewed the videotapes, documenting the interrogation of Abu Zubaydah and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, as part of an investigation into the C.I.A.'s secret detention and interrogation program. Mr. Helgerson completed his investigation into the program in early 2004.

Among White House lawyers who took part in discussions between 2003 and 2005 about whether to destroy the tapes were Mr. Gonzales, when he was White House counsel; Harriet E. Miers, Mr. Gonzales's successor as counsel; David S. Addington, who was then counsel to Vice President Dick Cheney; and John B. Bellinger III, then the legal adviser to the National Security Council. It is unclear whether anyone outside the C.I.A. endorsed destroying the tapes.

The new Justice Department investigation is likely to last for months, possibly beyond the end of the Bush administration.

Mr. Durham is currently the top-ranking deputy in the United States attorney's office in Connecticut, supervising all major felony cases brought in the state.

In the late 1990s he was assigned as a special attorney in Boston leading an inquiry into allegations that F.B.I. agents and police officers had been compromised by mobsters.

In taking over the inquiry, Mr. Durham is expected to be able to move ahead without a long delay because his team will include Justice Department prosecutors who have already been working on the case. But at least in the beginning, it is likely to proceed more slowly than parallel investigations on Capitol Hill that are already well under way. Investigators from the House Intelligence

Committee last month reviewed C.I.A. documents related to the destruction of the tapes, and the committee has called government witnesses to testify at a hearing scheduled for Jan. 16.

Mr. Mukasey pointedly did not designate Mr. Durham as a special counsel, in effect refusing to bow to pressure from Congressional Democrats to appoint an independent prosecutor with the same broad legal powers that were given to Patrick J. Fitzgerald, the special counsel who was appointed in 2003 to lead the investigation into the disclosure of a C.I.A. officer's identity. That inquiry resulted in the perjury and obstruction prosecution of I. Lewis Libby Jr., formerly Mr. Cheney's chief of staff. After Mr. Libby's conviction, President Bush commuted his sentence.

Mr. Fitzgerald was appointed after the attorney general at the time, John Ashcroft, determined that his own relationship with officials under possible scrutiny in the leak case forced him to recuse himself from the investigation. As special counsel, Mr. Fitzgerald had the authority of the attorney general for the matters under investigation.

Mr. Durham will report to the deputy attorney general, an office being held temporarily by Craig S. Morford. Mr. Durham will have the powers of the United States attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, a jurisdiction that includes C.I.A. headquarters. If a grand jury is convened as expected, it will meet in Alexandria, Va., where the prosecutor's office is located.

Mr. Mukasey said "in an abundance of caution" the office of United States attorney for the district, Chuck Rosenberg, had been recused from the case and would not take part in the inquiry. Mr. Rosenberg's office has investigated cases of detainee abuse by C.I.A. employees and contractors and has worked closely with the C.I.A. on

counterterrorism and espionage cases.

Mr. Mukasey said the decision was made "to avoid any possible appearance of a conflict with other matters handled by that office." Appointments like Mr. Durham's are sometimes made in cases in which prosecutors like Mr. Rosenberg have recused themselves.

In an Op-Ed article in The New York Times on Wednesday, Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton, the chairman and vice chairman of the Sept. 11 commission, said they believed that C.I.A. officials had deliberately withheld the tapes from the commission. They suggested that since the commission received its authority from both Congress and President Bush, any deliberate withholding of evidence might have violated federal law.

"Those who knew about those videotapes — and did not tell us about them — obstructed our investigation," they wrote.

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
January 3, 2008

26. Foul Play Not Suspected In Deaths Of Two Sailors In Ghana

By Louis Hansen, The Virginian-Pilot

The Navy does not suspect foul play in the New Year's Day deaths of two Virginia Beach-based sailors aboard the Fort McHenry during a liberty call in Ghana.

The sailors from the crew of the amphibious ship were found dead in their hotel room. Their names will be made public after their relatives are notified, said Lt. Patrick Foughty, spokesman for the 6th Fleet in Naples, Italy.

The bodies will be flown to Landstuhl Regional Medical Facility in Germany for toxicology tests, Foughty said.

Ghanaian police are leading the investigation of the deaths with assistance from

Naval Criminal Investigative Service agents, he said.

"There's no immediate evidence" of foul play, Foughty said in a telephone interview. He added that the Navy would not speculate on the cause of death until autopsies are performed.

CNN reported Wednesday that a Navy official, who spoke anonymously, said the sailors, a petty officer first class and petty officer third class, might have died of alcohol poisoning.

An unidentified naval official told The Associated Press that the two were among a trio of sailors who checked in at La Palm Beach Hotel in the capital of Accra on Dec. 31, "and on the next day, the third sailor found the two dead in their rooms and duly reported this to the hotel authorities."

The official said there was no evidence of a robbery or an attack on the sailors.

The Fort McHenry, an amphibious dock landing ship with a crew of 350 sailors, left Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base in October for a seven-month deployment to the Gulf of Guinea.

Foughty said the ship had made several port calls as part of a mission to train naval personnel in West African countries along the gulf. The visit to the port city of Tema was the second liberty in Ghana for the McHenry crew, following a Christmas visit to Takoradi.

Foughty said guidelines for liberty are set by commanding officers familiar with the ports. Sailors are briefed on safety and appropriate actions, he said. Navy investigators typically visit ports ahead of the crew to determine security risks, he said.

The mission to the Gulf of Guinea is a new Navy responsibility aimed at bolstering security off the West African coast.

The seas there are a hotbed of piracy, unregulated fishing, oil theft, and drug and human smuggling, according to a

Navy briefing.

The Fort McHenry is the first of two local ships to travel to the region under the program. The high-speed vessel Swift, also based at Little Creek, is scheduled to depart for the region on Friday.

Washington Times
January 3, 2008

Pg. 6 27. U.S. 'Skeptical' Of N. Korea Vow

Bolton: Told you so on nukes
By Jon Ward, Washington Times

The White House yesterday said that North Korea's delays in detailing its nuclear-weapons program have made the U.S. skeptical of Pyongyang's pledge to give up its nuclear weapons.

North Korea agreed in October to declare its full range of nuclear activities and weapons by Dec. 31, but has yet to make any announcement.

"They were a part of the agreement that established this deadline, and we don't have reason to believe that they won't, but we are skeptical, given the length of time that it's taken," said White House press secretary Dana Perino, in a morning briefing.

Later in the day, Mrs. Perino said that "as we've dealt with North Korea over the past several years, it is only appropriate that we would be skeptical."

Former Bush administration official John R. Bolton, who headed the State Department's counterproliferation office in President Bush's first term, called Mrs. Perino's comments "a shift, and a welcome one" in the White House position toward North Korea.

Mr. Bolton has been critical of the agreement reached last February, and expanded upon in October, for North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il to give up his nuclear-weapons program.

"I have faith in the North

Koreans that they're going to do what they always do," Mr. Bolton said yesterday, referring to several failed deals in the past. "I don't think there's any chance they're ever going to give up their nuclear weapons."

The State Department, however, reacted positively yesterday to North Korea's failure to meet the deadline agreed to in talks with the U.S. and four other countries — South Korea, Japan, China and Russia.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said that the disarmament process is still "trending in the right direction," and said it is understandable that the North Koreans missed the Dec. 31 deadline because the decision to disarm is "groundbreaking."

"Everybody has a healthy appreciation for the pace at which this process moves," Mr. McCormack said. "Sometimes it moves according to schedule, sometimes it moves in what some might consider a tectonic or glacial fashion, but it does move forward. But the fact that it doesn't progress at the pace that we would perhaps desire doesn't mean that people aren't working hard to ... try to make it work."

Mr. Bolton said the State Department is "in deal-saving mode."

But the Bush administration, despite its rhetoric yesterday, might also be poised to accept an imperfect outcome, said Jon Wolfsthal, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"They're walking a fine line. They want to avoid a crisis with North Korea," Mr. Wolfsthal said. "There's some concern that because they want to keep this on the back burner they might be willing to accept less than 100 percent to keep the process going on."

Mr. Wolfsthal said that the administration has focused most on political reconciliation in Iraq and has pushed the North Korean nuclear program to the second tier.

The North Koreans have begun to receive food and oil aid as they have begun the disarmament process, but they are pressing for removal from the U.S. list of nations that sponsor terrorism.

Honolulu Advertiser
December 31, 2007

28. Navy Expanding Cambodia Ties

By William Cole

Adm. Robert F. Willard, the commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, has pledged to strengthen the Navy's partnership with Cambodia and the collective security of the region.

Willard, who has his headquarters at Pearl Harbor, acknowledged the importance of a strong relationship with Cambodia in his "Rat-Pac Report" podcast posted Wednesday.

Willard discussed the impact of the recent visits to Cambodia by USS Essex and USS Gary, the U.S. Navy's first port visits there in 30 years. Essex is based out of Japan, and Gary out of San Diego.

In November, Willard traveled to Cambodia to see firsthand Essex's outreach, including medical and dental projects and professional exchanges.

"This was my first opportunity to visit Cambodia, and I had an opportunity to meet with their leadership and talk to them a little bit about how our Navy might help theirs and the relationship between their country and the United States," Willard said.

U.S. Navy doctors, dentists and corpsman from Essex and 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit conducted medical and dental civic action projects to help the people of Kampong Cham and the remote village of Kulen from Nov. 28-30.

"They've got senior military leadership and senior political leadership that are trying very hard to be successful and to reform their

country," Willard said. "They'd like our help, and we are going to give it to them."

Honolulu Advertiser
January 2, 2008

29. Training By Hawaii Guard Unit Helped End Philippines Standoff

By William Cole, Advertiser
Military Writer

Training provided by a Hawai'i National Guard unit helped Philippine military and police put down a Nov. 29 standoff in Manila, when about 12 soldiers took over a hotel and called for the resignation of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Members of the Hawai'i Guard's 93rd Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team had trained their Filipino police, military and fire counterparts in responding to terrorist actions and other disasters at Fernando Air Base in Batangas Nov. 5-9.

That knowledge was put to use when Philippine authorities ended the seven-hour standoff at the Peninsula Hotel amid gunfire and tear gas. Troops rammed an armored personnel carrier through the luxury hotel's glass doors.

Lt. Col. Trey Johnson III, who commands the Hawai'i unit, witnessed the police Special Action Force arrive at the hotel, and was less than a block away during the siege.

"It was pretty intense because there were shots ringing, and a couple of shots from inside," Johnson said. "I got to kind of monitor it firsthand, and I was talking to some of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the embassy people and the (police) about it."

In a Dec. 3 letter to Johnson, Philippine National Police Superintendent Silverio D. Alarcio Jr. wrote that the training in the use of personal protective equipment was particularly timely, and resulted in the successful police operations at the hotel.

"They were looking for a non-lethal means to quell the situation, minimize collateral damage, and what they did was they employed tear gas," Johnson said.

Protective gear

Although tear gas has been around for a long time, the Philippine police didn't typically train with protective gear, including special masks and suits, and that was one aspect of the training earlier in the month, he said.

The exchange was part of a continuing relationship the Hawai'i National Guard has with the Philippines and a developing relationship the Guard has with Indonesia.

The training with Philippine officials also helped widen the response capabilities that the Civil Support Teams bring to weapons of mass destruction incidents and other disasters.

Fifty-three of 55 such teams nationally and in U.S. territories have been certified by the Defense Department, Johnson said. Hawai'i's team of 22 Army and Air Guard personnel was certified in 2002.

The team has a \$1.5 million command vehicle with voice and digital hookup to two types of satellite systems.

"We can talk anywhere in the world, basically," Johnson said.

The unit also has a \$2.5 million lab truck that can analyze biological, chemical or radiological agents.

Closer to home

On Nov. 10, Johnson certified the Philippine team as having initial operating capability.

Seven team members from the Philippines took part in a Hawai'i Guard exercise in September on Kaua'i. In November, eight Civil Support Team members from Hawai'i and eight members of the 94th Civil Support Team on Guam conducted the exercise at Fernando Air Base in the Philippines under Johnson's command.

The exercise used parts of the base to simulate weapons of mass destruction attacks on the presidential Malacanang Palace and the airport in Manila.

The Hawai'i unit also works closer to home. In June, the Civil Support Team responded to a Pearl City fire that led to the discovery of 14 carbon monoxide canisters that were not certified for use and were being used to treat fish, he said.

Four had exploded and the remainder threatened adjacent neighborhoods. The Civil Support Team assisted in securing the remaining 11 cylinders over two days.

The Civil Support Teams are assigned varying response times to report nationally to a weapons of mass destruction incident. Currently, the Hawai'i team has to be ready to respond nationally in 12 hours, Johnson said. In January, the team has to be ready to respond in four hours.

Pacific Stars and Stripes
January 4, 2008

30. U.S.: Hospital In Philippines Not Forced To Close By Troop

By Jimmy Norris, Stars and Stripes

U.S. Embassy officials in the Philippines on Wednesday disputed local media claims that U.S. military personnel forced the nighttime closure of a civilian hospital on Jolo island in the southern part of the country.

The media reports prompted the Armed Forces of the Philippines to launch an investigation on Monday.

"U.S. forces did not and would not order anyone in the Philippines regarding hospital hours or any other issue," U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Rebecca Thompson said during a phone interview Wednesday. "U.S. forces are in the Philippines solely at the invitation of the government of the Philippines to provide

assistance to the Armed Forces of the Philippines."

Several media reports alleged that U.S. troops forced a hospital in Panamao municipality, on Jolo Island, to close at 6 p.m. in December, and prevented staff from treating patients after sundown, possibly because of alleged threats to U.S. military personnel working nearby.

Members of the U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Forces-Philippines are assigned to a nearby advanced operating base on the island.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines provided a release to Stars and Stripes on Wednesday that quoted a spokeswoman for the U.S. command.

In that release, JSTOF-P spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Melissa Schuermann stated that the media reports are "all allegations and are not true unless proven otherwise." Schuermann could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

The release also stated that the media reports have had an adverse effect on the joint humanitarian efforts of the AFP and the U.S. forces in the region.

AFP spokesman Maj. Eugenio Barara Jr. said Wednesday that U.S. forces were working near the hospital with Philippine marines at the time of the alleged incident. He was unable to provide additional details until he sees the final investigation report.

Christian Science Monitor
January 3, 2008
Pg. 20

31. How One Town Aids Returning Soldiers

By Sean J. Miller,
Correspondent of The
Christian Science Monitor

Warroad, Minn. -- On a crisp Minnesota morning, Art Brandli drove 30 minutes from his home in this northern town to a boiler manufacturer outside of Greenbush. Mr. Brandli, a Department of

Defense volunteer, didn't have much time to spare: His daughter was due to give birth to his first grandchild that day, and he wanted to be there for the delivery. But first he was determined to honor Dennis and Terri Brazier, the owners of Central Boiler, for their treatment of a worker who had served in Iraq with the Minnesota Army National Guard.

During his absence, the company had given the soldier, Monty Johnson, his annual bonus, preserved his seniority on the assembly line, and even entered his name in company drawings. His co-workers sent him care packages - everything from toothpaste to hunting magazines. The Braziers also stayed in touch with Johnson's wife, Sheila, inviting her to company parties and offering her money, if needed.

Now, at a brief meeting in the company's break room, Brandli lauded the unflagging support of the Braziers, who in turn called Guardsmen Johnson the real "hero" - to a standing ovation from the assembled employees.

The firm's handling of Johnson's deployment - and Brandli's fire-engine run to recognize it at the risk of missing his grandchild's birth - show the unusual lengths one small Midwestern town is going to to help returning veterans readjust to civilian life.

Four years into a war that is testing a nation's resolve, veterans are coming home to welcomes that their Vietnam counterparts could only dream about. Yet many still face formidable problems - the psychological wounds of war, wrenching readjustments in the home, indifference or even pink slips at work.

While professional counseling can be invaluable, experts say the embrace of a town also helps veterans cope with the transition to civilian life. If, in fact, it does take a village to help rally a returning vet, then this small town near

the Canadian border, imbued with a sense of Scandinavian paternalism, offers a poignant example of the power of tribalism.

"Warroad has always been a community loyal to its veterans," says Neil Richards, who manages the town's Legion post.

* * *

Warroad is a town of 1,700 people tucked against the southwestern shore of Lake of the Woods. As befits a community with cryogenic winters, life here revolves around ice fishing, the local diner, the American Legion outpost, and, most important, the hockey arena.

Camaraderie and a sense of community is embedded in the culture. Many know what casseroles their friends will bring to potluck dinners and who has been recently promoted at the local window manufacturing plant. Which is why when the Minnesota National Guard began asking communities about a year ago to prepare for the return of combat veterans, people in Warroad knew instinctively what to do.

For one thing, this was no ordinary homecoming. The returning soldiers, members of the so-called Red Bulls brigade, had served in Iraq for 22 months - the longest deployment for a Minnesota military unit since World War II.

For another, residents here had already been supporting their men and women overseas. Take Marvin Windows and Doors, one of the pillars of the local economy. Dan DeMolee, an Army Reservist, remembers receiving a flood of care packages from his co-workers at Marvin when he was in Iraq. "They were sending over supplies, DVDs, toiletries - it was overwhelming," he says. When Mr. DeMolee returned home to Warroad on leave, he was invited to speak at the company's annual meeting - a rare honor - after which he presented the Marvin family

with a flag that had flown over a US base in Iraq.

Students have gotten involved, too. After hearing about a local soldier who was recovering from foot surgery, Heidi Trihey, a teacher at Warroad Elementary School, got her pupils to contact him. The students and the wounded soldier, Army Spc. Jeff Srisourath, exchanged several letters. Then the class wanted to find a way to help him recover. Penny by penny, they raised \$100 to contribute to Mr. Srisourath's medical expenses. When they presented him with the check, "He was so humbled he didn't want to take it," Ms. Trihey recalls.

Her classes started corresponding with other soldiers as well. The soldiers wrote back, describing their daily life, and Trihey read the letters over the school intercom during morning announcements. "It brought awareness to the kids and the staff about what was going on around the world," she says.

Jason Hilligoss, a marksman with the Red Bulls, was one who received the notes and packages from the Warroad students - including on his birthday and Valentine's Day. "It definitely makes your job easier," he says. "You know you're going back to a good community."

Support for the soldiers also has come from local pews. Inside the log-framed St. Mary's church, the congregation worked for months to create a quilt of "prayer squares" that featured well wishes for the soldiers. "This is just a small town that really pulls together for things like that," says the Rev. Don Braukmann.

* * *

Though there isn't much bureaucracy in the area to support returning soldiers, the modest services that do exist come with a personal touch. Jeff Parker, a veterans service officer who works out of nearby Roseau, pursues his job with the ardor of a high school

football coach. A 28-year Air Force veteran, Mr. Parker doesn't rely on the reintegration materials that the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs sends out. He knows the town and the soldiers. "That's how we approach reintegration up here - family, friends, and church tend to look after the troops after they get home," he says.

Parker's cellphone rings. It's a Guardsman calling to chat. Parker sounds as though he could be talking to a nephew. "You keeping your nose clean? How about your buddies, they doing all right?" he asks. Some veterans are reluctant to reveal their personal problems. So Parker employs his network of eyes and ears - local legion members, teachers, pastors.

Recently, one young vet has been struggling with alcohol. He's put his truck in the ditch twice. One of his buddies told Parker that he might have a problem, so Parker invited the man to his office. He told him that his partying could end up killing him or innocent people. Now, Parker checks in with the young veteran regularly. "It's hard to become invisible up here," he says.

Johnson, the Central Boiler worker, knows that, too. He could feel the support while in Iraq. "If you don't have to worry about everything back home, it makes things that much easier," he says. During his deployment, Sheila Johnson was on her own with their three young children. She remembers getting calls from Johnson's co-workers offering to baby-sit. "I'm sometimes too proud to ask," she says. "But knowing they're a phone call away really helps."

Johnson then talks about his smooth transition home. But his wife interrupts him in mid-sentence. "It wasn't the transition from soldier to civilian that was hard; it was the transition back to husband and father," she says. Three months on, it's still a tough

adjustment - but less so, she adds, "knowing the community is supportive."

Army Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. 14

Military Times Poll **32. Positive Outlook**

Poll: Despite misgivings, troops optimistic on Iraq
By Tobias Naegele

The American military — still skeptical about whether the U.S. should have gone to war in Iraq, and still skeptical of President Bush's war leadership — nevertheless shows increasing optimism about the likelihood of success in the war, this year's Military Times Poll shows.

Sixty-two percent of active-duty respondents expressed some degree of optimism that the U.S. will succeed in Iraq, up from just 50 percent last year. At their peak of optimism in 2004, 83 percent said they thought success in Iraq was likely.

Though the troops are more optimistic about success, they are resigned to a long haul. The percentage of those who say we'll need to stay in Iraq more than 10 years is at 37 percent, up considerably from last year's 23 percent.

But while there appears to be growing optimism, the military's view of presidential leadership remains doubtful. When asked if they approved or disapproved of how Bush is handling the war in Iraq, 40 percent said they approved, 38 percent said they disapproved and the rest either said they had no opinion or declined to answer. Those ratings are only marginally better than last year, when the president's approval among the military plummeted from a high of 63 percent in 2004.

Similarly, in 2003 nearly two-thirds said we should have gone to war in Iraq; today only 46 percent feel that way. Again, that is only marginally better than last year, when 41 said we should have gone to

war in Iraq. By comparison, 80 percent said we should have gone to war in Afghanistan, and 77 percent think the U.S. will be successful there. But even there the president's war management fails to get majority support — only 47 percent approve of his handling of Afghanistan.

And the troops, staunchly Republican and staunchly conservative, are increasingly skeptical about how well Bush handles presidential duties overall. Only 48 percent approve; 34 percent disapprove.

The poll is the fifth annual gauge of active-duty subscribers to the Military Times papers. The results should not be read as representative of the military as a whole; the survey's respondents are, on average, older, more experienced, more likely to be officers and more career-oriented than the overall military population.

Still, the poll has come to be viewed by some as a barometer of the professional career military. It is the only independent poll done on an annual basis.

This year's poll was conducted by e-mail during the week of Dec. 10-17, with 1,468 active-duty people responding. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

The military audience responding to the poll is a war-hardened group. Three-quarters have done at least one combat tour. One-third have done two or more tours in Iraq. A quarter have done at least one Afghanistan tour.

And at the time of the poll, 24 percent of those responding were in a combat zone.

The operational tempo of the audience is high. Of those who have done at least two combat tours, 27 percent said they had less than a year between tours.

But despite the combat deployments, the military remains a largely satisfied group. Just under 80 percent

said they were somewhat or completely satisfied with their jobs. The same percentage would recommend a military career to others and 70 percent would support a child's decision to enlist. Two-thirds would re-enlist or extend their commitment if they had to decide today.

Those numbers remain largely unchanged during the past five years.

And despite the strains on the all-volunteer force and the difficulty in retaining and recruiting adequate numbers of troops, this career-oriented group still overwhelmingly opposes a draft. Two-thirds oppose drafting men and three-quarters oppose drafting women.

While the president's approval rating among the troops has weakened, it is still far better than among the general population. Last August, when Gallup asked, only 27 percent of civilians approved of the way the president is handling the war, compared to 40 percent in the military sample.

David Segal, a sociology professor and director of the Center for Research on Military Organization at the University of Maryland, said the growing optimism about the war's outcome "is a reflection of the way broader society views the war."

A Gallup poll at the start of this month showed a steady increase since last spring in the public's belief that the U.S. will win in Iraq. Many attribute that growing optimism to the surge of U.S. troops in Iraq. In that poll, 39 percent said victory is likely. And while that is up from a low of 28 percent last March, it is still far below the comparatively optimistic outlook the military has.

And there is still a huge gap between civilians and service members about whether the U.S. should have gone to war in Iraq in the first place. While only 34 percent of the military said the U.S.

should not have gone to war in Iraq, that number was 57 percent in the Gallup poll of broader society.

Segal said that difference wasn't surprising. People in the military, he said, "are basically in favor of using the military as an instrument of foreign policy."

Guard and reserve satisfied with jobs

Despite an unprecedented pace of operations in the past five years, National Guard and reserve members responding to this year's Military Times Poll say their job satisfaction is high.

And the overwhelming majority would sign up again — and would suggest that others do the same.

Two-thirds of those responding have served at least one combat tour and 13 percent were in a war zone at the time they responded to the e-mail poll, conducted between Dec. 10-17. This is the first year that the Military Times Poll has surveyed Guard and reserve members.

Like their active-duty counterparts, reservists were optimistic that the U.S. will succeed in Iraq and Afghanistan, but they are just as skeptical of the president's war management.

The poll drew 945 respondents and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. The sample was drawn from subscribers to the Military Times newspapers and should not be construed as a reflection of the entire Guard and reserve force. The sample is older (average age 42) and longer in service (average of 18 years) than the force as a whole. But it does offer insight into how members of the career Guard and reserves feel.

In both the active force and the Guard and reserves, 57 percent said there was little or no conflict between their family life and their military duties.

But when asked if they were satisfied with the amount of time they spent with their

families, half the active force expressed dissatisfaction. Only one-fifth of the Guard and reserve did.

Retirees see successful mission in Iraq

Retired military are just as optimistic about the outcome in Iraq as their active-duty counterparts — and just as doubtful of presidential leadership, according to the Military Times Poll.

Sixty-two percent of those retirees responding think success is likely in Iraq — exactly the same percentage as the active force. And they are split evenly between those who approve (46 percent) and disapprove (45 percent) of the way President Bush is handling the war. And they are just as doubtful of the president's overall performance as the active force; in both groups, 48 percent approve.

This is the first year the poll has sought the opinions of retirees. The sample was drawn from subscribers to the four Military Times weeklies. Just under 3,000 responded to the e-mail poll conducted Dec. 10-17. The margin of error is plus or minus 2 percentage points.

As a group, the retirees are as conservative politically and as likely to call themselves Republicans as the active force. But they differ markedly from the active force in one surprising area: The active force remains steadfastly opposed to the draft — 65 percent say no. But among retirees, 52 percent favor a draft.

The group of retirees polled generally seemed content about their former careers. Ninety percent would recommend a military career to others and 88 percent would support a family member's decision to enlist. But it may well be that the retirees who continue to subscribe to the military weeklies are different than the general population of retired military personnel.

How we did it

On Dec. 10, we e-mailed a

selection of active-duty, National Guard, reserve and retired military subscribers of our four military weeklies, asking them to take part in our annual poll. The respondents were directed to an independent polling firm that hosted the survey and tabulated the results. The poll was closed Dec. 17.

This is the fifth year that the active-duty force has been surveyed. It's the first year for the retired military and the Guard and reserve. E-mails went to 14,552 active-duty subscribers, with 1,468 responding; to 5,595 Guard and reserve subscribers, with 945 responding; and to 8,999 retirees, with 2,937 responding.

The margin of error in the survey of active-duty and Guard and reserve members is plus or minus 3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence interval, meaning there is a 95 percent probability that results of the poll are accurate within 3 percentage points. The margin of error for the retired military poll is 2 percentage points.

Those polled differ from the military as a whole in important ways — they tend to be older, higher in rank and more career-oriented.

Even so, it is perhaps the most representative independent sample possible because of the inherent challenges in polling service members, according to polling experts and military sociologists. The annual poll has come to be viewed by some as a barometer of the professional career military.

Washington Times

January 3, 2008

Pg. 4

33. USO Defends Link To MoveOn

By Associated Press

The chairman of the United Service Organizations defended its decision to pair with MoveOn.org to provide phone cards to U.S. troops after some USO board

members were outraged by a partnership with a group that opposes the Iraq war.

At least one board member, Vietnam veteran John Gioia, called for USO President Edward Powell to be fired over his decision to accept more than \$350,000 from MoveOn's members to buy phone cards for troops overseas.

In September, MoveOn angered opponents and even some supporters by placing an advertisement in the New York Times in advance of congressional testimony by Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, about the status of President Bush's war strategy. The ad said, "General Petraeus, or General Betray Us?"

That's hardly a sentiment felt by USO board members, many of whom are retired military officers or Bush appointees.

There were rumblings of discontent over Mr. Powell's decision last month to accept MoveOn's offer to e-mail its 3.3 million members soliciting \$15 contributions to pay for the phone cards.

"USO is partnering with an anti-war, anti-administration organization that castigates the efforts of General Petraeus and our troops — past and present — who have served in Iraq," Mr. Gioia said in an e-mail to other USO directors and employees. "I am disgusted by this action."

William Moll, chairman of the USO's board of governors, defended Mr. Powell's decision, saying in an e-mail to fellow directors that the organization welcomes contributions regardless of the political slant of the donor. He said special steps were taken to make sure MoveOn didn't make partisan or controversial statements when soliciting their members to give to the USO.

The Associated Press obtained the e-mails from a USO official who requested anonymity because the

messages were not intended for wide distribution.

The USO has helped troops for more than six decades, bringing entertainment overseas, providing care packages and providing shelter to families visiting injured service members. The organization recently received a \$20 million appropriation from Congress to supplement the money it raises privately.

Mr. Moll also noted that the USO accepts help from FreedomsWatch.org, a conservative group supporting the U.S. mission in Iraq, and that Sens. John McCain, Arizona Republican, and John Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat, have posted appeals on their Web sites urging people to give to the USO.

"We do not ask donors for their political preferences," Mr. Moll wrote. "We expect only that they support our fighting forces."

In a brief interview, Mr. Gioia said yesterday that he hopes the USO will come to the conclusion that it was a mistake to team with MoveOn and will return the money raised through the group.

"I think we have a chance to solve it internally," Mr. Gioia said.

USO spokesman Mark Phillips said Mr. Powell stood by his "carefully considered" decision.

Washington Post
January 3, 2008
Pg. VA3

34. Military Matters

By Steve Vogel

Searching for a Home for a World War II Memorial

The final resting place for a memorial to 40 U.S. soldiers killed in a World War II air crash remains in limbo, as the Army recently rejected proposals to place the granite stone at Arlington National Cemetery or nearby Fort Myer.

On June 14, 1943, an Army Air Forces B-17C Flying Fortress aircraft took off from

Mackay, Australia, shuttling U.S. troops who had been on rest and recuperation leave back to the fighting in New Guinea. The plane crashed at Bakers Creek, Australia, shortly after takeoff. There was a sole survivor.

Although the accident was the worst crash in the Southwest Pacific during the war and remains Australia's worst air disaster, it was largely unreported in the United States because of wartime restrictions on disclosing troop movements.

The fate of the soldiers has been brought to light in recent years in part by Robert Cutler, a Potomac resident and former professor at George Washington University. His father, Army Air Forces Capt. Samuel Cutler, ran the recreation facility in Mackay for U.S. service members and was the last man to see those aboard the plane.

Sam Cutler was haunted by the fate of the soldiers, as his son discovered while reading his father's wartime diary.

"I put the men on the ship, and so had a direct part in sealing their fate," Cutler wrote. "Also, I was at the scene of the crash and saw the mangled bodies, killed while flying at 200 miles per hour. Terrible."

Intrigued, Bob Cutler began researching the crash, which was kept classified by the U.S. government until 1958. Working with other volunteers who had connections to the crash, he pieced together the history and contacted family members, many of whom had never heard what happened to their loved ones. They created the Bakers Creek Memorial Association and raised money for a memorial similar to one Australia placed at the crash site in 1992.

A piece of pink Queensland granite, for use as a pedestal for the memorial, was donated by the governments of Australia and

the state of Queensland. The names of the crash victims were inscribed on a plaque. The memorial, about 5 feet high and 4 feet wide, now sits in the District at the Australian Embassy, which is considered foreign soil. The Bakers Creek association has pushed to have it moved to U.S. soil.

A letter signed by five U.S. senators was sent to Secretary of the Army Pete Geren on Nov. 2, asking that the Army select a site and noting that the memorial association preferred that the memorial be placed at Arlington Cemetery or Fort Myer.

The Army said it will not place commemorative monuments in Arlington without congressional authorization.

"Unfortunately, the placement of monuments in ANC would take away ever-decreasing land that is needed for burial purposes," Assistant Secretary of the Army John Paul Woodley Jr. wrote in a Nov. 27 letter.

Woodley's reply said that although the Army had considered Fort Myer, the best solution would be to accept an Air Force offer to fly the memorial to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, and house it at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

"It appears that the most viable option, and one with relevance to military aviation, is the Air Force's national museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base," Woodley wrote.

But Cutler, executive director of the association, says that Wright-Patterson is not the right home for the memorial.

"What's wrong is simply it's not Arlington," Cutler said in a telephone interview from his winter home in Las Cruces, N.M. What's wrong is foisting it on the Air Force, "when it's an Army issue."

Cutler said the association plans to make a renewed push for Fort Myer, which has its

own tie to aviation history and tragedy.

The Fort Myer parade grounds were the site of the first military test flight of an aircraft in September 1908, when Orville Wright succeeded in keeping the plane aloft for 1 minute 11 seconds. The second flight ended with a crash that injured Wright and killed his passenger, Lt. Thomas Selfridge, in the first powered-aviation fatality.

"We're going to write an appeal to the Army, asking them to reconsider Fort Myer on the basis that this is part of Army aviation history," Cutler said.

Later Cutler added in a message to memorial supporters, "Pity, they couldn't find room for a [small] granite marker anywhere in the Ft. Myer Historic District."

Change of Assignment

This marks the last Military Matters for the time being, as the column goes on hiatus while The Washington Post increases its coverage of local military affairs in the daily newspaper.

Military Matters, The Post's column for and about issues of importance to the military community in the Washington region, began in 1998 and continued until 2004, when I went on leave to write the book, "The Pentagon: A History," which was published last June by Random House.

Since the column was relaunched last year, I've had the privilege of relating many stories of memorable people and brave actions. Among those people are Robert W. Riddle of Springfield, who spoke out on his deathbed in defense of the treatment he received at beleaguered Walter Reed Army Medical Center; Army 1st Sgt. Bruce L. Reges who, with the help of his mother, Jean Burn, of Reston, is giving out puppets to Iraqi children in an effort to foster better understanding of U.S. troops deployed in their nation; the Dixon family of Howard County, which now has a

father and two sons serving in Iraq; Michael Francis "Moe" Collins of Anacostia, who disappeared in 1942 with his crewmates aboard the USS Grunion, a submarine whose wreckage was recently found in the waters off Alaska's Aleutian Islands; and the soldiers of the 76th Infantry Division, veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, who came to the District in the fall for a final reunion.

Washington Post
January 3, 2008
Pg. 8

The Trail

35. Giuliani Calls for Afghanistan Buildup

Looking For His Own Surge

WOLFEBORO, N.H. -- Rudy Giuliani, trying to reframe the campaign debate on terrorism, called Wednesday for doubling the number of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

Without criticizing President Bush's conduct of the war, Giuliani said, "We need to begin a surge in Afghanistan and make it effective right now." He said he knows the military is stretched thin because of the Iraq war but that the addition of 10 Army combat brigades would accommodate the additional burden.

An expanded military would not be "historically out of line" with the 550,000 troops who served in Vietnam or the 350,000 in Korea, Giuliani said. He did not mention that the country had a draft during those conflicts or address the cost of military expansion.

In an interview, Giuliani declined to describe the Afghanistan war effort as faltering, saying he wants to make sure "we don't lose ground" against a reemergence of al-Qaeda and the Taliban and that more troops might help stabilize Pakistan as well. Giuliani later told reporters that Army recruitment efforts could be boosted to produce the

additional 10,000 troops needed and that his "surge" might have to be gradual.

-- **Howard Kurtz**

Los Angeles Times
January 3, 2008

36. Getting A Fighting Chance For U.S. Grants

A Pentagon program with centers at two Southland universities helps little companies compete better.

By Tony Perry, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

SAN DIEGO —In a tree-lined business park here, a start-up company with 17 employees hopes to compete with mega-size defense contractors and give a battlefield advantage to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Avaak Inc. -- the name comes from a Hebrew word for dust -- hopes to beat the big high-tech firms in developing a pint-size camera and transmitter that combat troops can use to gather intelligence without unduly risking their lives.

The common wisdom holds that the Pentagon budget is a piggy bank for big companies that can afford lobbyists and consultants but that the little guy -- the maverick entrepreneur or the start-up like Avaak -- is just out of luck.

To correct that mismatch, the Pentagon in recent years has launched several efforts to see that start-ups aren't frozen out.

One of them is the Center for Commercialization of Advanced Technology, which is helping Avaak navigate the twists and turns of the Pentagon testing and procurement system.

With centers at San Diego State University and Cal State San Bernardino, CCAT (pronounced sea-cat) helps small businesses and others find financial backers and deal with the complex process of applying for research and development money from the federal government. Students

often are assigned to do studies and other duties.

The Avaak prototype camera, about the size of a large marshmallow, is meant to enable troops to see around corners or into enemy-held buildings by tossing several of the devices into the area in question.

Business majors from San Diego State developed a business plan for Avaak. Avaak's goal is to enhance the images, increase the transmission and make the tiny devices tougher.

"The objective is to ruggedize them to the point where the SEALs can use them," said Gioia Messinger, co-founder and chief executive of Avaak.

Along with providing advice, CCAT plays the role of middleman for new firms and tinkerers, vetting applicants for federal grants and other support.

In six years, CCAT has evaluated about 995 proposals and made more than 300 awards for marketing, research and development and business support worth about \$23.4 million. By one calculation, more than 2,700 workers are engaged in projects funded, at least in part, by CCAT.

"Our goal is make innovation occur faster," said Louis G. Kelly, chairman of the CCAT executive board. "We seek out early-stage innovative technology and help people through the morass of the [Pentagon] acquisition process."

What started as an earmark appropriation from Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Redlands) in the summer of 2001 is now an annual part of the Department of Defense budget.

The first year's appropriation, \$5.2 million, was largely to enhance technology in the area of disaster management. But after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the emphasis was shifted to homeland security and combat. The current year's appropriation is \$4.1 million.

Among the several dozen firms that have been helped are ones designing better safety barriers for Navy ships at foreign harbors, improved methods for detecting acoustic waves that could provide an early warning of torpedoes and a better system of detecting individual weapons.

Other grants have gone to university researchers, including one to UC San Diego to work on a hand-held sensor to detect nerve warfare agents. Another grant went to the Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command to develop better robots for finding and immobilizing roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One of the firms to receive CCAT help was Liteye Systems Inc. of Centennial, Colo., which specializes in head- and helmet-mounted displays.

Founded in 2000, Liteye received a \$75,000 product development grant from CCAT and has several products in various phases, including one for NASA to enable astronauts to see information on the face guard of their spacesuit helmets.

Another is a clip-on for a combat helmet to enable a soldier or Marine to see data from a global positioning system, thermal imagery or a PDA type of hand-held computer. One innovation being worked on would enable information about enemy locations to be seen in red through an eyepiece.

"Having his threats laid out this way would give him a major advantage," Liteye co-founder and Vice President Ken Guyer said.

So far, the Avaak device has passed several tests conducted by the military at Ft. Polk in Louisiana, Ft. Monmouth in New Jersey and Twentynine Palms in Southern California. More research is underway with a \$4-million grant from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which has a liking for

innovations that think "outside the box."

Like many companies, Avak would like to break into the public sector. CCAT helped with advice about marketing, partnering and finding investors.

"For a company trying to have a foot in both markets, it was very important," said Andy Paul, the firm's vice president for business development.

CCAT will soon begin accepting proposals for its latest round of research and development funding.

Priority will be given to projects aimed at improving robots and unmanned vehicles that could be used by U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The war fighter is our client," CCAT program director Tom Sheffer said.

Washington Post
January 3, 2008
Pg. D2

37. Lockheed-Pakistan Deal Criticized

Lockheed Martin's plan to supply F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan drew criticism from Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joe Biden (D-Del.), who said proceeding with the sale during turmoil in Pakistan is a mistake. The Pentagon on Dec. 31 announced a \$498.2 million order for Lockheed, of Bethesda, to provide the fighters as part of a foreign military sales program coordinated by the Air Force. Congress cleared the \$5 billion program in July 2006.

Washington Post
January 3, 2008
Pg. D8

38. Britain's BAE Wins Work Order For U.S. Army

BAE Systems, Europe's biggest defense company, won a \$375 million Army contract for materials used to rebuild Bradley Fighting Vehicles. The

deal is "in preparation for an anticipated contract to reset an additional 639 Bradley Combat System vehicles," BAE said. The London-based company will supply parts to upgrade 451 Bradley A3 vehicles and 188 Bradley Operation Desert Storm vehicles.

Washington Post
January 3, 2008
Pg. D4

Federal Diary 39. Standard Intelligence Test

By Stephen Barr

The keepers of the nation's secrets soon will be evaluated against common standards on how well they analyze problems, share information and stand behind their professional judgments.

Those job performance standards and others will apply to all rank-and-file civil service employees in the government's intelligence community, according to a directive issued last month by the director of national intelligence, Mike McConnell.

It marks the first time that the employees, across 16 agencies, will be evaluated according to the same performance requirements.

Intelligence agencies have been faulted in Congress and by independent commissions for missing opportunities to detect the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorists and for a flawed analysis of the threat posed by Iraq under Saddam Hussein. In a bid to pull intelligence agencies closer together, Congress approved a law in 2004 that permits the director of national intelligence to set policies for managing intelligence employees.

The new directive does not create a single personnel system for the intelligence employees but lists a set of factors -- such as collaboration, critical thinking, communication skills, technical expertise and integrity -- that agencies should use in annual job evaluations

of non-supervisory personnel.

"This is all about trying to create an institutional culture for the intelligence community," said Ronald Sanders, chief human capital officer for McConnell.

The new job performance standards are to take effect no later than Oct. 1, although some intelligence agencies may implement them sooner. They apply to employees at General Schedule Grade 15 and below. A companion directive on performance standards for senior intelligence officers is nearing completion.

Sanders said the new standards will be critical to the success of a "joint duty" program announced last June that permits intelligence employees to rotate through assignments in various agencies to gain broad experience. The rotations help determine who gets promoted, and having a common set of performance standards will make it easier to compare employees who work in different agencies, Sanders said.

The job standards will not have an immediate bearing on pay raises, but a study is underway on moving intelligence employees into a performance-based, market-oriented compensation system. Changes affecting pay will be phased in, probably over a five-to-six year period, Sanders said.

The directive provides leeway to the agencies on how they implement the standards but envisions they will use a five-level rating system that assumes most employees should be able to meet job expectations and achieve a "successful" rating, the system's midpoint.

USA Today
January 3, 2008
Pg. 12

Opposing view 40. A Diplomatic Charade

Unseemly talks with Kim Jong II pose security threat to U.S., allies.

By Nicholas Eberstadt

Once and for all: Can we please stop pretending that Kim Jong II is negotiating with us in good faith? The only surprise about North Korea's latest missed deadline — and broken promise — in the ongoing "six-party talks" is Washington's seemingly unending tolerance for this diplomatic masquerade.

Well into the fifth year of negotiations on denuclearizing North Korea, what tangible results do our arms control conferees have to show for their efforts? Only a temporary shutdown of the North's Yongbyon plutonium facility. (State Department happy-talk notwithstanding, that facility has not yet been fully "disabled," much less "dismantled.")

What about the covert uranium enrichment program, whose exposure back in 2002 triggered today's nuclear drama in the first place? Pyongyang still officially denies its very existence. Indeed, breaking pledges signed last February, North Korea has not yet even bothered to offer an accounting of its past nuclear activities to its "negotiating partners" (China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States).

Our response to that violation has been, yes, a request for more talks! In the no-penalty wonderland of conference diplomacy, it would appear Kim Jong II can blow us off whenever he wants — confident we'll always shuffle back to the table. But the unseemly charade of denuclearization negotiations with North Korea is worse than an embarrassment. It is, in fact, compromising the security of America and her allies.

During the six-party talks, the North Korean government continued to amass plutonium for weapons. Over those same years, Pyongyang went from hinting it had nuclear weapons, to explicitly declaring it

possessed nukes, to test-blasting a nuclear weapon.

Viewed without illusion, these vaunted denuclearization talks with North Korea have in practice provided diplomatic cover for Pyongyang to achieve its long-desired status as a nuclear weapons state. And, by the way, any American official who thinks Kim Jong Il wouldn't dare sell his nuclear wares abroad is off in a dream world.

The Bush team apparently has no benchmarks for failure in its nuke talks with Pyongyang — so the conferencing continues. But it continues at our peril.

Nicholas Eberstadt, a researcher at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of The North Korean Economy — Between Crisis and Catastrophe.

Washington Times
January 3, 2008
Pg. 15

41. Gays And The Military

Democrats prefer San Francisco-style

By Elaine Donnelly

The last of two installments.

Democratic presidential candidates want to impose the full weight of San Francisco-style liberal ideology upon the armed forces. You would never know it, however, given the silence or equivocation of Republicans on military social issues.

As noted in this space yesterday, the Center for Military Readiness has been conducting a non-partisan survey to determine where the presidential candidates stand on military issues affecting discipline and morale. Candidates who did not respond to survey questions, including all the Democrats, missed an opportunity to proclaim sound, responsible priorities for the military. Previous statements, however, indicate that any Democrat winning the White House

would turn the Pentagon into a laboratory for social experimentation by civilian ideologues. These include feminists and homosexuals — determined activists who demand government power to impose the homosexual agenda on all institutions of American life.

Democrats condone the pure feminism of New York Sen. Hillary Clinton, defined by the issue of women in land combat. In 2005, then-House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter, California Republican, spearheaded legislation to restore Army compliance with Defense Department regulations exempting female soldiers from placement in or near direct ground combat (infantry) battalions. Mrs. Clinton and feminist colleagues countered with a resolution framing this as a feminist issue, which encouraged the Pentagon to continue violating regulations and laws requiring congressional notice and oversight.

Unauthorized, incremental repeal of women's exemptions from land combat will eventually affect the Marine Corps and Special Operations Forces, forcing them to cope with predictable consequences: gender-normed training standards to create the illusion of equality, higher injury rates, pregnancies, and disciplinary issues that hurt readiness and morale. Eventually, ACLU lawyers will file another lawsuit challenging young women's exemption from Selective Service registration.

With women in land combat, the ACLU will win.

Parents whose daughters are denied college loans for failure to register will wonder why these issues were not debated in 2008. They should know that Mrs. Clinton, Sens. Barack Obama of Illinois and Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, and former Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina favor Selective

Service registration for young women, or participation in mandatory national service.

Mr. Obama is being advised by former Navy Secretary Richard Danzig, an outspoken advocate of women serving on submarines. If an Obama administration mandates "career opportunities" for female sailors on cramped submarines, which operate with constantly recycled air that elevates risks of birth defects, submarine commanders may have to disrupt undersea missions by conducting hazardous mid-ocean evacuations of pregnant sailors.

Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware strongly supports the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an international treaty that would surrender sovereignty to international bureaucrats on all issues involving women — meaning, just about everything. Mr. Biden and other senators have demanded hearings on military sexual misconduct and "violence against women," as defined by anti-male feminists.

None has recognized an underlying problem: policies pretending that servicemen and women are interchangeable, "ungendered" beings actually encourage scandals and violence against women, provided that the enemy inflicts the violence in close combat.

All of the Democratic candidates want to repeal the 1993 law stating that homosexuals are not eligible to serve in the military, which is frequently mislabeled "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Congress rejected "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," then-President Clinton's proposal to accommodate discreet homosexuals, as unworkable. Mr. Clinton imposed it on the military anyway with administrative regulations inconsistent with the law.

In a June 2007 debate, Mrs. Clinton admitted that "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was

supposed to be a "transitional policy" toward full acceptance of professed homosexuals in uniform. To avoid political consequences for colleagues in Congress, any Democratic president would likely push for quick repeal of the 1993 law, without public hearings or debate.

That would force the military to follow the "civil rights" model, mandating equal housing and social status for homosexual military couples. "Sensitivity training" programs would enforce acceptance of known homosexuals in the ranks. There will be no "national security" benefits, since numbers of homosexual discharges have been small in comparison with separations for other reasons, such as pregnancy, weight standard violations, or drug offenses.

Add to this scenario public resistance that would hurt recruiting, potential abuse of subordinates living in close quarters, plus higher risks of HIV infection, which increase the numbers of non-deployable personnel. The result will be unprecedented disciplinary problems that detract from morale and readiness.

We cannot afford a San Francisco military.

In 1992, Republicans helped Mr. Clinton to win by not debating this issue — in the same way that some Republicans are avoiding the issue today. Will a presidential leader emerge who is prepared to defend the culture of the only military we have? The one who does so first could become president of the United States.

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42. US Needs To Get Tough With Pakistan

By Peter W. Galbraith

President Bush recently described Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, as an "absolutely reliable ally" in the war on extremists and a man of his word. In fact, Pakistan's record under Musharraf is one of broken promises while tolerating acts harmful to US interests. The assassination of Benazir Bhutto, weeks after a US-brokered deal for her return to Pakistan, underscores the bankruptcy of the current approach. Instead of treating Pakistan like the ally it isn't, the country should be treated like the national security problem it has become. Moreover, Bush should be careful with his language. The United States needs to be tough with Pakistan, not gullible.

Pakistan's military has a long history of thumbing its nose at the United States, and getting away with it. In 1982, the then-dictator, General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, assured Congress that "Pakistan has neither the means nor the intention of developing a nuclear explosive device." Congress took Zia at his word, making arms sales and assistance conditional on Pakistan sticking to Zia's promise. It was, of course, a lie, and in 1990 the first President Bush cut off military assistance and halted the delivery of F-16 aircraft that Pakistan had already paid for. Instead of insisting that Pakistan keep its word, US officials took the Pakistani side of the argument, insisting the cut off was unfair.

Pakistan got the planes and, after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, billions in US military assistance to fight against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. The New York Times recently reported that the Pakistani military has diverted half of this assistance for use against India, apparently with no reaction from Bush. Pakistan's military has learned from experience that the United States does not monitor its assistance. In the 1980s, Congress appropriated billions

to assist the Afghan resistance fighting the Soviet Army. Although Congress clearly intended this money to go to a coalition of Afghan parties that included pro-Western moderates, the Reagan administration and CIA allowed Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency to funnel the bulk of the funds to the two most radical, and anti-American, Islamic parties. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the principal beneficiary of the agency's distribution of US tax dollars in the 1980s, fights today alongside the Taliban.

The United States should get tough with Pakistan. Bush should insist that Pakistan become a real ally in the war on terrorism. In recent years, the Inter-Services Intelligence and Pakistan's nuclear establishment have been pursuing their own anti-American agenda, in violation of Pakistan's supposed official policy. The intelligence agency has supported the Taliban and continues to maintain contact with Islamic radicals, including possibly Al Qaeda. A.Q. Khan, head of Pakistan's nuclear program, sold nuclear weapons technology and materials to America's worst enemies: North Korea, Iran, and Libya. It is not remotely plausible that Musharraf did not know or acquiesce in these activities.

The United States should insist that Pakistan's elected leaders have full control over all of Pakistan's national security programs, including the nuclear file and the Inter-Services Intelligence. The agency should be restructured, or better, abolished. It is a bastion of anti-Western and antidemocratic sentiment. And, Bush should make clear that he does not believe that Khan acted on his own. At a minimum, the United States should insist that Pakistan make Khan, and his records, available to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The United States could

signal its new approach by sponsoring a Security Council resolution appointing a UN investigator to look into the murder of Bhutto. When a suicide bomber blew up former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, the Bush administration helped lead the effort to pass such a resolution. The Bhutto killing raises similar questions, including as to why there was no Pakistani security or police protecting her.

Instead of praising Musharraf as a man of his word, Bush should tell him that he will no longer tolerate unkept promises or be satisfied with obvious lies.

Peter W. Galbraith, a former US ambassador to Croatia, is the author of "The End of Iraq: How American Incompetence Created a War Without End." In 1989, he received Pakistan's highest civilian award, the Sitari-Quad-i-Azam, for his work in restoring democracy in the country.