

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD



January 7, 2008

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IRAQ

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...When four Iraqi soldiers moved to block the bomber from entering, he detonated his explosive vest, killing at least the four soldiers and wounding at least six people, according to the Iraqi police and military officials. There were differing accounts of the death toll, with some saying as many as 11 had been killed, but they could not be confirmed.
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PAKISTAN

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(*Washington Times*)....Combined dispatches
Pakistan reacted angrily yesterday to reports that President Bush is considering covert military operations in the country's volatile tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.
7. **In Musharraf's Shadow, A New Hope For Pakistan Rises**
(*New York Times*)....David Rohde and Carlotta Gall
Over the last several months, a little-known, enigmatic Pakistani general has quietly raised hopes among American officials that he could emerge as a new force for stability in Pakistan, according to current and former government officials. But it remains too early to determine whether he can play a decisive role in the country.
8. **U.S. Officials Review Approach In Pakistan**
(*Washington Post*)....Ann Scott Tyson and Robin Wright

...The Pentagon seeks greater authority to conduct operations while coordinating with the State Department. Adm. Eric Olson, head of U.S. Special Operations Command, visited Pakistan last month and discussed with President Pervez Musharraf and senior military leaders how else the U.S. military can assist in countering "a very complex insurgency," one military official said.

9. **Poll Finds Pakistanis Want Democracy**

(Boston Globe)....Reuters

Most Pakistanis want their country to be a democratic Islamic state but are deeply distrustful of the United States and its war on terrorism, according to a poll released yesterday.

AFGHANISTAN

10. **Defying U.S. Plan, Prison Expands In Afghanistan**

(New York Times)....Tim Golden

As the Bush administration struggles for a way to close the military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, a similar effort to scale down a larger and more secretive American detention center in Afghanistan has been troubled by political, legal and security problems, officials say.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

11. **Why Anthropologists Are Reluctant Army Recruits**

(CQ Weekly)....Elaine Monaghan

Anthropologists are the original participant-observers, but they don't much like what they're seeing — and what some members of their profession are doing — at the behest of the Department of Defense.

12. **Union Asks High Court To Hear Pentagon Suit**

(Federal Times)....Unattributed

The American Federation of Government Employees plans to take its fight against the Pentagon's new personnel system to the Supreme Court.

ARMY

13. **Katrina Victims Swamp Corps For Trillions In Claims**

(USA Today)....Brad Heath

...The Army Corps of Engineers received 247 claims from residents, businesses and government agencies seeking \$1 billion or more, according to the agency. That's the tip of a very large iceberg: The corps, which designed and built the city's storm protections, faces more than 489,000 claims for the damage and deaths in the post-Katrina flooding.

14. **In Blog, A Military Man Writes About His Own Death**

(New York Times)....Brian Stelter

Andrew Olmsted, a United States Army major who wrote an online blog for The Rocky Mountain News, prepared for the possibility of his death by writing a 3,000-word piece.

15. **On The Mend**

(Army Times)....Kelly Kennedy

Army disability retirement system better.

16. **Why Have Fort Monroe Costs Soared?**

(Newport News Daily Press)....David Lerman

Two local members of Congress are pressing the Pentagon to explain why the cost of closing Hampton's Fort Monroe has increased 298 percent.

MARINE CORPS

17. **The Long And Winding Road**

(Washington Post)....Walter Pincus

In 1996, the Marine Corps Combat Development Command determined that its expeditionary forces needed an agile and mobile weapon to fire over the enemy's front lines, a concept quickly dubbed Dragon Fire.

AIR FORCE

18. **C-17 Mission Completed**
(Tacoma News Tribune)....Scott Fontaine
 Near the bottom of the globe, an American crew took off from a New Zealand runway to help a stranded British ship. And after a drop above one of the most treacherous reaches of the Earth, airmen from McChord Air Force Base were the heroes.

CONGRESS

19. **The Many Factors Behind 2008's Bigger Raise For Federal Workers**
(Washington Post)....Stephen Barr
 ...The differences in the raises largely can be attributed to the political process on Capitol Hill. At the end of 2006, Congress had not completed most of the annual appropriations bill and left it to President Bush to set the 2007 raise. Last month, Congress put together a consolidated spending bill and got Bush's signature before the year ended.

AFRICA

20. **Kenya 'Critical' To U.S. Military**
(Washington Times)....Rowan Scarborough
 A destabilized Kenya would deprive the United States of one of its staunchest allies in Africa, because Nairobi since September 11 has provided military bases, communications networks and intelligence-sharing to prevent al Qaeda from making inroads on the continent.

MIDEAST

21. **As Bush Heads To Mideast, Renewed Questions On Iran**
(Washington Post)....Michael Abramowitz and Ellen Knickmeyer
 President Bush intends to use his first extended tour of the Middle East to rally support for international pressure against Iran, even as a recent U.S. intelligence report playing down Tehran's nuclear ambitions has left Israeli and Arab leaders rethinking their own approach toward Iran and questioning Washington's resolve, according to senior U.S. officials, diplomats and regional experts.
22. **Egypt To Bolster Gaza Border**
(Washington Post)....Ellen Knickmeyer
 Egypt has agreed to spend \$23 million in U.S. military aid on robots and other advanced technology to detect smuggling tunnels along its border with the Gaza Strip, a U.S. congressman said Sunday. Egypt also has accepted a U.S. offer to send experts from the Army Corps of Engineers to train Egyptian border guards in the technology, said Rep. Steve Israel (D-N.Y.).

EUROPE

23. **Poland Signals Doubts About Planned U.S. Missile-Defense Bases On Its Territory**
(New York Times)....Judy Dempsey
 Signaling a tougher position in negotiations with the United States on a European antiballistic-missile shield system, Poland's foreign minister says his country's new government is not prepared to accept American plans to deploy missile-defense bases in Poland until all costs and risks are considered.

TERRORISM

24. **Qaeda Urges Meeting Bush With Bombs**
(New York Times)....Associated Press
 An American member of Al Qaeda urged fighters to meet President Bush "with bombs" when he visits the Middle East this week, according to a new videotape posted on the Internet on Sunday.
25. **Al Qaeda's Newest Triggerman**
(Newsweek)....Sami Yousafzai and Ron Moreau
 Baitullah Mehsud is being blamed for most of the suicide bombings in Pakistan, including Benazir Bhutto's

assassination. The rise of a militant leader.

MILITARY

26. **Helping Hand For Hurt Bomb Squads**

(U.S. News & World Report)....Paul Bedard

It has never been a great job, but in the Iraq war, where improvised explosive devices are a leading cause of injury and death, being a member of the military bomb squad is more dangerous than ever.

BOOKS

27. **In A Shorter War, The Numbers Might Have Added Up**

(Washington Post)....Michael Abramowitz

...But in a book being published this week -- "What a President Should Know ... But Most Learn Too Late" -- Lindsey offers for the first time what he terms "the true story" behind his estimate, including what he sees as a mistaken White House strategy to play down the costs of war to maintain public support for an invasion.

OPINION

28. **2008 Full Of Challenges For Asia Leaders**

(Honolulu Advertiser)....Richard Halloran

The year 2008 will confront many leaders in Asia, especially those in Beijing and Islamabad, Pakistan, with exceptionally difficult tests. For the U.S., stuck with a lame-duck president and a tedious election campaign, the tests will not come until a new president enters the White House in January 2009.

29. **Biased Against Homosexuals -- (Letter)**

(Washington Times)....Kayla Williams

...The operations tempo of the military today makes every service member who is well-qualified and hardworking a valuable, necessary part of the team. Troops on the ground are aware of that. It is unfortunate that Ms. Donnelly places her political bias above this reality.

New York Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. 11

1. Deadly Bombing Mars Iraqi Celebration

By Solomon Moore and
Mudhafer al-Husaini

BAGHDAD — As jubilant Iraqi soldiers celebrated Army Day by dancing and chanting anti-insurgent slogans inside a downtown office building here on Sunday, a suicide bomber tried to shove his way through the gate.

When four Iraqi soldiers moved to block the bomber from entering, he detonated his explosive vest, killing at least the four soldiers and wounding at least six people, according to the Iraqi police and military officials. There were differing accounts of the death toll, with some saying as many as 11 had been killed, but they could not be confirmed.

“The suicide bomber was very young,” said an Iraqi police officer who declined to be identified because he was not allowed to speak to the news media. “We found his severed head, and we found a Yemeni identification card near the rest of his body.”

A military officer with the 11th Iraqi Army Division who also spoke on condition of anonymity praised the four soldiers’ sacrifice. “If they had allowed him to enter the building, even more people would have been killed,” the officer said.

The Iraqi authorities said they suspected that the bomber was sent by Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a mostly homegrown insurgent group that American intelligence agencies say has foreign leadership. Many of the group’s suicide bombers have been recruited abroad and smuggled into Iraq from neighboring countries.

Despite the insistence by Americans and the Iraqi government that insurgent groups have been greatly weakened in recent months, the

attack on Sunday, the 87th anniversary of the Iraqi Army’s founding, was another reminder of the threat posed by the militants.

Much of the credit for an overall decline in attacks in Iraq recently has been given to American-recruited Sunni Arab militias known as Awakening groups. But they have increasingly become targets of the insurgent groups they have been fighting, and that trend continued Sunday.

In Baquba, gunmen burst into the home of Sheik Dhari Mandeel, a leader of the main Awakening group in Diyala Province, and shot him to death. The attackers also killed the sheik’s wife, according to the local police, and kidnapped 10 of his relatives.

And in Baghdad’s predominantly Shiite district of Shaab, the police reported that Ismael Abbas, another tribal leader who had pledged loyalty to the United States, was shot to death outside his home on Sunday morning.

Members of the Awakening groups have complained lately that they are increasingly caught between Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and the Shiite-led Iraqi government, which is suspicious of the Awakening groups and has shown reluctance to integrate them into the security forces.

Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, in an interview in London with the prominent Arabic-language newspaper Asharq al-Awsat, signaled his government’s ambivalence about the Sunni militias — at once praising them for fighting Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia while expressing suspicion that many of their members may be insurgents themselves, trying to infiltrate Iraq’s security forces.

“The government supports the Awakening Councils, but it must safeguard itself from infiltration,” he said. “We, as a government, have intelligence now that the Baathists ordered its members to join the Awakening Councils and that

Al Qaeda did that as well.”

Mr. Maliki returned to Iraq on Saturday after a series of medical tests at a London hospital. Government officials said that the prime minister, a Shiite, was suffering from exhaustion, but that tests had shown that he was in otherwise good health.

The Iraqi police said Sunday that a joint raid by American and Iraqi forces had killed four suspected insurgents and destroyed two homes, for fear that they were booby-trapped, in southwest Baquba, a city north of the capital that has become a focal point for insurgent groups. A United States military spokesman said he could not confirm that the operation took place.

In addition to the Army Day bombing, four other bombing attacks in Iraq — one in Baghdad and three in the northern city of Mosul — killed at least three people and wounded at least 19.

The Iraqi police also said they had discovered 12 bodies in Baghdad and five severed heads outside Baquba.

The violence overshadowed Iraq’s military celebrations, including a display of its newest equipment at the national soldier’s memorial, a large saucer-shaped sculpture inside the heavily guarded Green Zone. Soldiers in crisp fatigues and royal blue formal wear stood at attention during the exhibition of armored vehicles, ambulances and bomb-detection equipment.

In order to avoid security threats, the commemoration was invitation-only.

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

Newsweek
January 14, 2008

2. 'The Reality Is Very Hard'

Gen. David Petraeus has led

the most dramatic turnaround in Iraq since 2003. But he's not planning to celebrate yet.

It's far too early to declare Gen. David Petraeus, 55, the general who tamed Baghdad. A dramatic drop in violence in the Iraqi capital is recent and tenuous, and Petraeus is the first to admit it owes much to decisions taken by Sunni insurgents and Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's militia to suspend attacks there. Still, the Ph.D.-toting general, who co-wrote the Army's counterinsurgency manual and has led the surge of U.S. troops, has presided over the most dramatic turnaround in Iraq since the invasion in 2003. As this election year begins, that has some partisans talking up his future political prospects. Petraeus met with NEWSWEEK's Babak Dehghanpisheh and Larry Kaplow at his office in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad last week. Excerpts:

NEWSWEEK: HOW did the Anbar Awakening movement [of Sunni sheiks allying with U.S. troops] start? How much of that was planned, and how much was luck?

PETRAEUS: I do think that we were willing to take risks and ... take advantage of opportunities that presented themselves. Because of the accumulated experience that our leaders have, and because of changes in the way the Army and the Marine Corps prepare units for deployment ... our leaders are really quite nuanced in their understanding of situations and, again, have the ability to recognize opportunities where perhaps we might not have recognized them in the past.

How much did you wrestle with the idea of talking to people who had attacked and maybe even killed Americans?

We did wrestle with it... There were many [conversations] as we all sort of tried to come to grips with this... I think [many Sunnis]

just sort of woke up and said, "What were we thinking? Why in the world did we sheiks, who often go to Amman for the weekend, why did we end up in league with guys who have a Taliban-like ideology, kill our sheiks and take our daughters?" ... By the way, take none of this to be optimistic or pessimistic. [We] should be realistic at this point, and the reality of Iraq is that it's very hard.

So you wouldn't say Al Qaeda's finished?

Oh, no, not at all. Al Qaeda is like a fighter that's taken some very serious shots to the head but shakes them off [and] can come back with a very lethal right hand.

Are you frustrated that the Iraqi government has been slow to absorb these Sunni fighters?

To me that's somewhat understandable... because some of these individuals were undoubtedly in the resistance. So there have to be safeguards, there have to be assurances. It does seem like the eye of a needle sometimes, trying to get these lists [of fighters to be integrated into the security services] through. But they do get through.

Are you having direct talks with Sadrists as well?

We certainly talk to members of what would most accurately be called the Sadr Trend, as you know—the political wing. We have certainly had conversations at local levels with numerous leaders of Jaish al-Mahdi [Sadr's militia] ... It's waxed and waned. I guess you can classify it as mildly waxing right now.

Were you surprised by Sadr's declaration of a ceasefire? Skeptical?

Sure. I think we've said repeatedly, "We're from Missouri, the Show Me State." But ... if we could sit down across the table with insurgents who were shooting at us—like we did in the late spring and summer, [with] Sunni Arab insurgents—we figured we

could at least give Jaish al-Mahdi a chance. Now, having said that, once an element or an individual violates that ceasefire, obviously they're criminals and they have to be dealt with by Iraqi or Coalition forces, or together, more likely.

Where do you see troop levels by the time U.S. elections roll around in November?

What we're doing right now is the analysis that will provide the basis for recommendations that the ambassador [Ryan Crocker] and I will take back in late March or early April. We've literally just begun that analysis. We're looking at three different scenarios. One is things get better; one is things stay about the same as we come down [in troop strength]; another is things get worse.

Have you considered becoming a vice presidential candidate?

I will say on the record ... I really do not have any political aspirations. I have chosen to serve our country in uniform and I respect those who serve it in politics ... They won't nominate me for anything anyway.

So you wouldn't consider a presidential run?

No.

You have a copy of the Aeneid in your bookshelf here. What are you reading now?

I just finished David Halberstam's book on Korea; I think it's titled "The Coldest Winter." I read Rick Atkinson's second book in his trilogy on World War II, which is terrific. He's a good buddy. He did the [trip] to Baghdad in the back of my Humvee. He learned about his second or third Pulitzer while we were out in a dust storm. I read "April 1865," and it's very good. And I read "Grant Takes Command," which was really quite instructive.

Some could compare you to Grant.

I'm not trying to get

compared to anybody. Every situation is unique.

Los Angeles Times

January 7, 2008

3. All Eyes On The Iraqi Army

Training efforts continue amid U.S. hopes that the security forces will be able to maintain gains cited in security. But the troops have had a mixed track record.

By Tina Susman, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

MAHMOUDIYA, IRAQ — The 10 rows of men stood ramrod straight, their right hands saluting in unison, their left arms stiffly at their sides, save for one in a plaster cast and sling.

Then, in a burst of collective energy, they raced out the door, crossed a vast field and hurled themselves onto an obstacle course of swinging ropes, muddy ditches, catwalks and towering walls.

Welcome to the new Iraqi army, or at least a tiny portion of it that U.S. and Iraqi officials hope will serve as a model for the rest. The mid-December event was a graduation at the new Iraqi Army Commando Course, and it provided a look at the progress being made and the challenges still facing the 160,000-strong army.

On the plus side, 50 soldiers made the cut. On the minus side, 106 didn't. Still, the pass rate was better than for four previous commando classes, which graduated about 35 each.

"We're ready for anything. We'll demolish the enemy with a big fist!" declared newly minted commando Ziad Khalaf Hamza, 20, an amber-eyed judo expert.

Perhaps no Iraqi institution faces greater scrutiny nowadays than the security forces, which the U.S. and British militaries are counting on to maintain recent gains officials have cited.

Britain last month signed

over responsibility for security in Basra, the last of the four provinces under British control to be handed over to Iraqis. The U.S. military has begun pulling out the five extra combat brigades it deployed in Iraq last year, which will bring the American troop level to about 134,000 by the middle of the year, down from more than 160,000.

Yet relying on Iraqi security forces has proved risky. In February, when Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr. handed off command of U.S. troops in Iraq to Gen. David H. Petraeus, he predicted that Iraqi forces would be in charge of security nationwide by fall.

Casey's time in Iraq was marked by a push to bring down the U.S. troop level and speed the transfer of responsibilities to the Iraqi government. But insurgents took advantage of the less experienced Iraqi forces to ramp up violence, which led President Bush to deploy the additional brigades.

Attacks on civilians and coalition forces have dropped to their lowest level in more than two years, according to Army Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the day-to-day commander of U.S. troops in Iraq. Opinions vary, though, on how ready Iraqi troops are to take charge.

Iraqi government spokesman Ali Dabbagh said in December that Iraq would need foreign troops to defend it for a decade.

"Of course we need international support. We have security problems. For 10 years our army will not be able to defend Iraq," Dabbagh told the state-run Al Iraqiya TV.

A Pentagon quarterly report to Congress released Dec. 18 says that 77% of Iraqi army units are considered capable of planning, executing and sustaining operations with little or no help from U.S. forces. But it says the army's readiness is constrained by shortfalls in its ability to manage logistics, such as

providing equipment. It also says a shortage of officers to take on leadership roles "remains problematic" and that it will "take years" to close the gap.

In testimony to Congress in September, Petraeus said training of the Iraqi army had been hampered by violence that kept too many troops on combat missions.

Brig. Gen. Ali Furaiji, commanding officer of the Iraqi army's 4th Brigade, 6th Division, whose area of operation includes former insurgent strongholds south of Baghdad, agreed with that assessment.

"The thing is, our soldiers do not get much training because they're always out on the streets," said Furaiji, who served under Saddam Hussein for 20 years. "Back in the old army, we'd get up at 5 a.m., run [about three miles], train 13-hour days."

However, Furaiji said the old military was not highly respected, because it was seen as a protector of Hussein rather than the Iraqi people.

That's one reason for the Commando Course, aimed at instilling a sense of pride in young soldiers and putting them on the path to becoming officers.

"When he finds there is more respect for him, he'll find he has better stamina," Furaiji said after handing out framed diplomas, commando badges and watches to the latest graduates.

"This invests much more leadership skills at a lower level," said Brig. Gen. James Yarbrough, commanding general of the Iraq Assistance Group, which advises the Iraqi military on training programs.

Troops chosen by commanding officers train for 12 hours a day for about three weeks. Most drop out quickly during the grueling physical tests, said Furaiji, a tall, elegant man who said that he could not make the grade himself. Asked why not, he held up a pack of Kent cigarettes. "Five a day,"

he said.

The desire to become a commando is fierce, Furaiji said, recalling a young man who broke down and cried when he failed the physical test. The soldier begged for another chance. Furaiji gave it to him, and he passed. The man with the cast on his arm had broken it during the course but went on to gain his commando badge anyway.

Those who pass the endurance portion of the 23-day course move on to other specialties, most of which were not part of previous Iraqi army training: changing a Humvee tire under fire, for example, or first aid.

Yarbrough said the Iraqi military practice had been to transport wounded soldiers to the nearest civilian hospital. By comparison, each U.S. military platoon has a medic.

On the obstacle course, graduates showed off their skills to an audience of U.S. and Iraqi officers and journalists. They belled under wires through muddy bogs, rappelled down walls, inched across ropes suspended about 40 feet in the air and pounded one another in a judo ring. The finale was a demonstration of house raiding and target shooting.

Afterward, Yarbrough said he had few worries about the dedication of soldiers such as judo expert Hamza, or Mohammed Ali Kamel, a boxer who also was among the newly graduated commandos.

"I want to protect my home, my country and the innocent people," Kamel said.

The Iraqi army has not suffered from the sectarian troubles that have beset the national police force, which is overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim and infiltrated by militiamen.

Yarbrough said one of his main concerns with the army was improving its ability to manage logistics. "That's proving a tough nut to crack," he said, referring to such tasks as repairing damaged equipment. The difficulty is

linked to the broader U.S. effort to force Iraqi officials to turn to their own government to fix things, instead of counting on American forces.

Ten new logistics centers, to be completed in May, are designed to speed up the transition by giving the Iraqi military a place to warehouse parts and equipment and to send hardware that needs repair.

"But as you map this out, it simply takes time," Yarbrough said, noting that the military was being created from scratch after having been disbanded under a 2003 decree by the U.S. officials of the Coalition Provisional Authority that ran Iraq in the immediate aftermath of Hussein's ouster.

Yarbrough, without criticizing that move, acknowledged the strain it had placed on U.S. and Iraqi forces. "I'd hope we would deliberate that decision in future conflicts very, very hard," he said.

Christian Science Monitor
January 7, 2008

4. New Look At Foreign Fighters In Iraq

An analysis shows that the bulk of them come from countries allied with the US.

By Gordon Lubold, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON -- Little has been known about so-called foreign fighters in Iraq, other than that they are typically motivated by ideology and are usually smuggled in through Syria in small numbers. Many perform suicide bombing missions and instigate some of the country's starkest violence.

But a new analysis published last month by experts at West Point shows that most of these individuals come from Saudi Arabia and Libya, as well as other North African countries such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. The analysis suggests that the bulk of foreign fighters originate from countries with

whom the United States is allied – Saudi Arabia, for one – and also offers clues as to how American officials can stem the flow of these terrorists.

The report, which is based on data compiled by Al Qaeda and captured by coalition forces last fall, shows that the most violent acts in Iraq are typically carried out by foreign fighters. Their goals sometimes align with the group Al Qaeda in Iraq, which, estimates suggest, has between 5,000 and 8,000 people associated with it. The foreign fighters, however, represent just a small fraction of that group.

"We don't mean to imply that the bulk of the organization is foreign," says Lt. Col. Joseph Felter, who co-wrote the analysis for the Combating Terrorism Center at the US Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. "But what you can take away from this is that it seems very likely that the vast majority of the suicide bombers do seem to be committed by non-Iraqis."

The US military discovered documents and computer data that belonged to Al Qaeda after conducting a raid in Sinjar, which is along the Syrian border in western Iraq and was thought to be an entry point for many of Iraq's foreign fighters. The documents and computer data offered a unique look at the flow of foreign fighters.

US military officials note that they don't know precisely how many foreign fighters are in Iraq; even this report does not indicate one way or another. Some accounts have suggested that the number is no more than a few hundred at any one time.

But while the total number is unknown, US military officials have determined that the fighters' flow into Iraq is decreasing – from as many as 110 per month in the first half of 2007 to about 40 per month this past fall.

Although it remains unclear the degree to which Shiite-dominant Iran is

influencing the violence in Iraq, the analysis indicates that most of the foreign intervention is Sunni-based, which includes Al Qaeda.

The more than 750 personnel records obtained at the raid site showed that Saudi Arabia was the country of origin for 41 percent of the records analyzed, or 244 fighters. Libya was the source for 18 percent, or 112 of the fighters. Syria, Yemen, and Algeria were the next most common, according to the 29-page report, titled "Al-Qaida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records."

One of the only other analyses of foreign fighters, conducted in 2005 by an Israeli researcher, did not indicate nearly as many fighters being recruited from North Africa. The revelation that more are from North Africa comes as the US Defense Department sets up a new combatant command in Africa that aims to help African nations make themselves less hospitable to foreign terrorists.

The Sinjar analysis also offers clues about how the fighters get to Iraq: Most come through Syria, and the fighters, depending upon their nationality, use fairly predictable routes to Syria.

For example, fighters from Libya tend to go through Egypt and then Syria. Tunisians typically travel through Germany and then Turkey to Syria.

Armed with this knowledge, the US and its allies can attempt to break those "logistical chains" before the fighters even get to Syria.

"There seem to be very established routes," says Brian Fishman, the other co-author of the analysis. "That suggests that there are clear logistics networks based on nationalities to get people there. We need to break those logistics chains not only to Syria, but all the way in Syria."

Any analysis of foreign fighters in Iraq is accompanied

by much skepticism since no accounting, even using data obtained from terrorist networks, rarely offers a transparent look at who is behind the violence in Iraq. Lieutenant Colonel Felter and Mr. Fishman acknowledge that the data is only a snapshot.

Such pictures of those entering Iraq only provide insights into that particular group of people and aren't usually representative, says Anthony Cordesman, a senior expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank in Washington.

"We have a very rough idea of people moving through Syria," he says. "These numbers are extremely rough, and there is no real way to know who is an Iraqi and who is not an Iraqi."

Meanwhile, the dynamics of the violence in Iraq have changed as the security situation has improved. Overall, violence is down. Whereas as many as 1,600 attacks were taking place across the country per week in June, there are now fewer than 600 attacks per week, says Col. Donald Bacon, a spokesman for the US military in Baghdad.

Yet as security has improved, it has forced insurgents and foreign fighters to change the way they operate.

Foreign fighters entering Iraq from Syria typically came through Anbar Province, but as security there has improved – attacks there are down 90 percent from earlier this year – those fighters have had to move their routes farther north, say military officials. As a result, declines in violence have been far more gradual in the American military sector known as Multi-National Division-North, which includes Mosul and Diyala.

New York Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. 13

Military Memo
5. For Pentagon And

News Media, Relations Improve With A Shift In War Coverage

By Thom Shanker

WASHINGTON — The anguished relationship between the military and the news media appears to be on the mend as battlefield successes from the troop increase in Iraq are reflected in more upbeat news coverage.

Efforts from the new Pentagon leadership, as well as by top commanders at the headquarters in Baghdad, have also eased tensions between reporters and those in uniform. Positive or negative, the troops' view of the news media is set as much by the tone of commanders as by the tenor of individual news clips.

Gen. David H. Petraeus, the senior American officer in Iraq, and his subordinates have worked hard to convey the rationale for their strategy and the evidence that persuades them it is succeeding. Adm. Mike Mullen, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has engaged reporters in a variety of venues: at the Pentagon, on travels across the United States and overseas, including the Middle East.

And, perhaps most important, their boss, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, has stated a view never heard from his predecessor, Donald H. Rumsfeld. "The press is not the enemy," Mr. Gates tells military audiences, including at the service academies, "and to treat it as such is self-defeating."

At the start of the Iraq war, decades of open hostilities between the military and news media dating from Vietnam were forgotten, if only for a brief and shining moment. One reason was the embed program for the Iraq invasion that placed hundreds of reporters from across the journalistic spectrum into combat units. Soldiers and correspondents shared tents, meals and risks, and both sides said that perhaps their differences were

not irreconcilable after all.

Then, however, the success of the lightning-quick invasion became not the full story, but merely the early chapter of a frustrating and deadly narrative of war in Iraq.

As insurgent violence rose in 2003, echoes of that earlier conflict in Southeast Asia could be heard. The downturn accelerated with the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in 2004. The credibility of the armed forces fell even further in the eyes of reporters when it was disclosed that military contractors in Baghdad had paid Iraqi reporters for stories in the local news media.

In return, the military's familiar complaints resumed: There is no coverage of the good news from Iraq, officers said. The focus is on violence and daily casualty counts, and not progress. Reporters cannot or will not get out and about in Iraq to tell the whole story. Editors and reporters are biased.

As recently as October, Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, who had served as the first commander of the Iraq occupation, came out of retirement to condemn coverage of the war.

"The death knell of your ethics has been enabled by your parent organizations who have chosen to align themselves with political agendas," General Sanchez said in comments that earned far less coverage than his equally harsh statement that the Bush administration had mismanaged the war.

"What is clear to me," General Sanchez told a media group, Military Reporters and Editors, "is that you are perpetuating the corrosive partisan politics that is destroying our country and killing our service members who are at war."

Just days earlier, in his valedictory address as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Peter Pace used his final minutes as the nation's highest-ranking officer to

describe how his interactions with Congress and the news media had soured him on both.

"In some instances right now we have individuals who are more interested in making somebody else look bad than they are in finding the right solution," General Pace said.

Yet, as the tone of news reporting from Iraq has shifted in recent months, so have the views commonly heard from officers in Iraq.

Recent interviews with dozens of military officers in Iraq found a sense of frustration that the war was receiving less coverage than they would like — but a sense nonetheless that the coverage was forthright and balanced.

"The media in general is doing a pretty good job portraying the situation," said Lt. Col. Rodger Lemons, operations officer for the First Cavalry Division's Fourth Brigade Combat Team.

Interviewed last month in Mosul as he was completing a 15-month tour, Colonel Lemons said: "Spectacular attacks still get the big media attention. I would like to see more good news. Who wouldn't? But the reporters who have embedded with us have been fair."

In a study of last year's published news reports conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism at the Pew Research Center, more than half of all coverage of Iraq was found to be pessimistic. The view of American policy and military progress was mixed over all, with 4 in 10 pieces offering a mixed assessment, one-third a negative view and one-quarter more optimistic.

The troop increase ordered by President Bush in January began to show results over the summer, and improving trends in security have received commensurate coverage. The Pew researchers found that positive assessments of the expanded American military operations began to rise in November.

"It is obvious that many of the stories in print and television now have a more positive tenor; it ties directly to what is happening on the ground," said Lt. Col. James Hutton, public affairs officer for Multinational Corps-Iraq and the spokesman for Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, commander of day-to-day military operations.

"I'm satisfied that the majority of reporters on the ground want to get the story right and are responsive when their reporting is seen as less than accurate and we call them on it," said Colonel Hutton, who is nearing the end of his second tour of duty in Iraq.

Setting the tone from the top, General Petraeus decided that managing the military's media mission required a high-ranking career public affairs officer, and he assigned Rear Adm. Greg Smith, previously chief of information for the Navy, to be director of communications for Multinational Force-Iraq, the top military command structure in the country.

Admiral Smith, the first one-star public affairs officer in Baghdad, acknowledged that troops who had previously served in Iraq "may have lived through a time when it seemed that all that was being reported was negative news, even though they were doing so much good on any given day that was not being reported."

"I think there was a period time in the past in which reporting was behind reality," Admiral Smith said. "Today, that gap between perception and reality has closed, if not completely."

Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl, public affairs officer for Multinational Division-Baghdad for the past 15 months, described one concern heard often from officers in Iraq — the lack of reporters covering the war as it entered another decisive period during the troop increase.

"In general, I thought the majority coverage was very

accurate and fair," said Colonel Bleichwehl, who has served twice in Iraq. "There were not always enough reporters there full-time to provide the complete story of what was going on in a city with seven million people, much less the rest of the country."

Washington Times

January 7, 2008

Pg. 9

6. Suggestion Of Covert U.S. Mission Stirs Anger

Musharraf puts full blame on Bhutto for assassination

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Pakistan reacted angrily yesterday to reports that President Bush is considering covert military operations in the country's volatile tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

"It is not up to the U.S. administration. It is Pakistan's government who is responsible for this country," chief military spokesman Maj. Gen. Waheed Arshad told Agence France-Presse.

"There are no overt or covert U.S. operations inside Pakistan. Such reports are baseless and we reject them."

The New York Times reported on its Web site late Saturday that under a proposal being discussed in Washington, CIA operatives based in Afghanistan would be able to call on direct military support for counterterrorism operations in neighboring Pakistan.

Citing unnamed senior administration officials, the newspaper said the proposal called for giving CIA agents broader powers to strike targets in Pakistan.

Pakistan's western tribal belt is seen as a safe haven for Taliban and al Qaeda militants, who carry out attacks in Afghanistan, as well as the most-likely hide-out for al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. The United States now has about 50 soldiers in Pakistan, the report said.

In an interview broadcast yesterday, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf blamed

Benazir Bhutto for her own death, saying she should not have poked her head out of her vehicle's sunroof while leaving the Rawalpindi rally, where she was assassinated.

Mr. Musharraf said his government provided Mrs. Bhutto with enough protection and it was her own negligence that led to her death. She should have left the rally quickly instead of lingering to wave to supporters, Mr. Musharraf said in an interview with CBS' "60 Minutes" program.

"I mean, God was kind — she went into the car in spite of the fact that she was waving and all that. She did go into the car. Now — now is the point. Why did she stand outside the car?" he said. "For standing up outside the car, I think it was she to blame alone. Nobody else. Responsibility is hers."

The U.S. strike plan reportedly was discussed by Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and national security aides in the wake of the Dec. 27 assassination of Mrs. Bhutto.

Gen. Arshad also dismissed comments from Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York, a Democratic candidate for president, that she would propose a joint U.S.-British team to oversee the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal if elected president.

"We do not require anybody's assistance. We are fully capable of doing it on our own," he said.

Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesman, Mohammad Sadiq, late yesterday described the New York Times report as "speculative" but said any suggestion of U.S. forces on its territory is "unacceptable."

On Mrs. Clinton's remarks about nuclear weapons, Mr. Sadiq added: "It must be clearly understood that Pakistan alone is and will be responsible for the security of its nuclear assets."

New York Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. 3

7. In Musharraf's Shadow, A New Hope For Pakistan Rises

By David Rohde and Carlotta Gall

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Over the last several months, a little-known, enigmatic Pakistani general has quietly raised hopes among American officials that he could emerge as a new force for stability in Pakistan, according to current and former government officials. But it remains too early to determine whether he can play a decisive role in the country.

In late November, the general, Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, took command of Pakistan's army when the country's longtime military ruler, Pervez Musharraf, resigned as army chief and became a civilian president. At that time, General Kayani, a protégé of Mr. Musharraf's, became one of Pakistan's most powerful officials.

The Pakistani Army has dominated the country for decades and the army chief wields enormous influence. Over time, as General Kayani gains firmer control of the army, he is likely to become even more powerful than Mr. Musharraf himself.

"Gradually, General Kayani will be the boss," said Talat Masood, a Pakistani political analyst and retired general. "The real control of the army will be with Kayani."

But within weeks, General Kayani's loyalties — and skills — are likely to come under intense strain. The two civilian political parties that oppose Mr. Musharraf are vowing to conduct nationwide street protests if Mr. Musharraf's party wins delayed parliamentary elections now scheduled for Feb. 18.

The parties already accuse Mr. Musharraf — who is

widely unpopular according to public opinion polls — of fixing the elections. If demonstrations erupt, General Kayani will have to decide whether to suppress them. What he decides will determine who rules Pakistan, according to Pakistani and American analysts. The decision also could affect whether the country descends into even deeper turmoil.

They predict that General Kayani will remain loyal to Mr. Musharraf to a certain extent. But they say he will not back Mr. Musharraf if his actions are viewed as damaging the army.

"He's loyal to Musharraf to the point where Musharraf is a liability and no longer an asset to the corporate body of the Pakistani military," said Bruce Riedel, a former C.I.A. and White House official and a Pakistan expert.

As he has ascended, General Kayani has impressed American military and intelligence officials as a professional, pro-Western moderate with few political ambitions. But the elevation to army chief has been known to change Pakistani officers.

Mr. Musharraf was seen as uninterested in politics when he became army chief in 1998. A year later, he orchestrated a coup and began his eight-year rule.

General Kayani has become an increasingly important figure to the Bush administration as Pakistan's instability grows and Mr. Musharraf faces intensifying political problems, according to American and Pakistani analysts.

Mr. Musharraf's declaration of de facto martial law in November was widely seen in Pakistan as an effort by him to crush his civilian opponents and cling to power.

At the same time, many Pakistanis blame Mr. Musharraf for failing to prevent the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto last month. They

contend that the government did not provide adequate security.

General Kayani's personal views are difficult to discern. Since taking command of the army, he has continued his practice of never granting interviews.

In one of his first acts as army chief, he declared 2008 the "year of the soldier," an attempt to improve the weakening morale of the Pakistani Army, a gesture that was praised by American military officials. The army has struggled in combating militants, with more than 1,000 soldiers and police officers killed since 2001. Last summer, several hundred soldiers surrendered to militants, causing intense concern among Pakistani military officials.

The battle against insurgents continues to be intractable. A security official said Monday that suspected Islamic militants killed eight tribal leaders involved in efforts to broker a cease-fire between security forces and insurgents in northwestern Pakistan, The Associated Press reported. The men were shot in separate attacks late Sunday and early Monday in South Waziristan, a mountainous region close to Afghanistan where militants allied with Al Qaeda and the Taliban operate, the official said.

General Kayani's early political moves as commander included two small gestures that were interpreted as attempts to ease tensions between the government and civilian opposition parties. After the assassination of Ms. Bhutto on Dec. 27, he sent soldiers to place a wreath on her grave and privately met with her husband.

On Thursday, General Kayani led the first meeting of Pakistan's corps commanders — the dozen generals who dominate the military. It was the first time in eight years that Mr. Musharraf had not attended. During the meeting,

the general stressed unity.

"It is the harmonization of sociopolitical, administrative and military strategies that will usher an environment of peace and stability in the long term," the state-run news media quoted him as saying. "Ultimately, it is the will of the people and their support that is decisive."

The son of a junior officer in the Pakistani Army, he is from Jhelum, an arid region in Punjab Province known for producing Pakistani generals. Raised in a middle-class military family, he attended military schools and is seen as loyal to the army as an institution above all else.

His appointment was popular among army officers, some of whom blame Mr. Musharraf for hurting the army's image.

His career has included repeated military education in the United States. He received training in Fort Benning, Ga., and graduated from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. He also took an executive studies course at the Asia-Pacific Center of Security Studies in Hawaii in the late 1990s.

In an army deeply enmeshed in Pakistani politics, he has declined to ally himself with any political groups, according to retired Pakistani military officials. As a junior officer, he briefly served as a military aide to Ms. Bhutto during her first term as prime minister in the late 1980s, but has stayed away from politicians since then.

"Kayani throughout his career has shown little in the way of political inclination," said a senior American military official who has worked extensively with him but did not wish to be identified because of the sensitivities of Pakistani politics. "He is a humble man who has shown a decided focus on the soldier."

When he was appointed deputy army chief last fall, his first move was to visit the front

lines in the tribal areas. Spending the Muslim holiday Id al-Fitr with soldiers prompted American military officials to praise him as a "soldier's soldier."

The senior American military official predicted that the Pakistani Army would perform better under General Kayani than Mr. Musharraf, who was often distracted by politics while serving as both president and army chief.

But any progress General Kayani achieves militarily could be undermined by continuing political turmoil, according to Pakistani analysts. To end that instability, he might have to strike a "grand bargain" with Pakistan's civilian political parties that would end the army's dominance.

"If Kayani, in a way, tries to promote democracy and becomes the protector of democracy," said Mr. Masood, the Pakistani political analyst and retired general, "then I think Pakistan has a chance."

Mr. Masood and other analysts said General Kayani would be more able to strike such a bargain than Mr. Musharraf, who is now deeply distrusted by the country's political parties. But to do so he would have to peacefully give up power, something no Pakistani leader has done in the country's 60-year history.

Carlotta Gall reported from Islamabad, and David Rohde from Islamabad and New York. Eric Schmitt contributed reporting from Washington.

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January 7, 2008
Pg. 13

8. U.S. Officials Review Approach In Pakistan

Fight Against Al-Qaeda May Intensify

By Ann Scott Tyson and Robin Wright, Washington Post Staff Writers

The political upheaval in Pakistan and emergence there of a new military leader has

revitalized the Bush administration's long struggle to develop a coherent strategy for uprooting al-Qaeda from Pakistan's western tribal areas, U.S. officials said yesterday.

The administration is hopeful that Pakistan's new army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Kiyani, will support more robust efforts involving U.S. intelligence and military operatives targeting al-Qaeda's terrorist sanctuaries in the country, the officials said.

"Kiyani has a strong recognition that things haven't worked," said one senior military official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic. "He recognizes the level of competence and proficiency" of Pakistan's forces "will need attention."

The unrest has led to a greater focus in Washington on threats facing Pakistan, including not only terrorism, but increasingly a growing religious insurgency, said another senior military official. "The conditions we face are not waiting, so why should we wait?" he said.

Senior U.S. officials discussed at the White House last week a new proposal to give U.S. Special Operations forces and the CIA greater leeway to conduct operations in the tribal areas.

But that proposal, along with several different U.S. scenarios for addressing the sanctuary, remains hampered by bureaucratic infighting in Washington, according to senior military officials familiar with the plans. "There should be a plan, singular. That is what we are trying to do now," one official said.

One point of contention involves who within the U.S. government would approve operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Area, the rugged and lawless region bordering Afghanistan.

The Pentagon seeks greater authority to conduct operations while coordinating with the State Department.

Adm. Eric Olson, head of U.S. Special Operations Command, visited Pakistan last month and discussed with President Pervez Musharraf and senior military leaders how else the U.S. military can assist in countering "a very complex insurgency," one military official said.

The State Department position is that the U.S. ambassador should approve every operation in Pakistan.

The impasse between the Pentagon and State Department proved a sticking point in last week's meeting, although the disagreement is known to have festered since 2002.

The meeting, attended by Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other senior national security advisers, was first reported yesterday by the New York Times. Administration officials confirmed that the meeting took place, but spokesmen for the Pentagon, CIA and State Department declined yesterday to discuss it.

Currently, the main U.S. counterinsurgency effort in Pakistan consists of a multiyear package of economic development and military assistance that is now beginning to be implemented. The military component aims to bolster training and equipment for Pakistan's Frontier Corps, which operates in the tribal areas, and to step up training of elite Pakistani Army units by U.S. Special Forces.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates recently warned that al-Qaeda and Taliban havens are a serious problem. "One of the top-agenda items that we have with the government of Pakistan is working together in terms of ... what they can do more unilaterally, how we can work with them to help them be more effective, and whether there are instances in which we should or must take action by ourselves," Gates told a House committee.

In Pakistan, speculation

has intensified for weeks that the Bush administration would act unilaterally in the northwestern frontier to counter al-Qaeda's growing presence.

Some U.S. military sources said that such public speculation, while unfounded, nevertheless serves to lessen the political cost of any U.S. actions.

Still, some Pakistani observers warn that a more visible U.S. presence would almost certainly trigger a backlash against Musharraf. "It would give the militant Islamic parties a strong whip to use against moderates, especially in the northwest territories," said Shuja Nawaz, a Washington-based Pakistani journalist and author.

Staff writers Joby Warrick and Michael Abramowitz contributed to this report.

Boston Globe
January 7, 2008

Pakistan 9. Poll Finds Pakistanis Want Democracy

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Most Pakistanis want their country to be a democratic Islamic state but are deeply distrustful of the United States and its war on terrorism, according to a poll released yesterday. Funded by the US Institute of Peace, the poll was taken in the nuclear-armed nation before President Pervez Musharraf's six-week state of emergency and the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto last month. The results, released about six weeks before elections scheduled for Feb. 18, show that a large majority of Pakistanis see democracy as fully compatible with Islam, the pollsters said.

--Reuters

New York Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. 1

10. Defying U.S. Plan, Prison Expands In

Afghanistan

By Tim Golden

WASHINGTON — As the Bush administration struggles for a way to close the military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, a similar effort to scale down a larger and more secretive American detention center in Afghanistan has been troubled by political, legal and security problems, officials say.

The American detention center, established at the Bagram military base as a temporary screening site after the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, is now teeming with some 630 prisoners — more than twice the 275 being held at Guantánamo.

The administration has spent nearly three years and more than \$30 million on a plan to transfer Afghan prisoners held by the United States to a refurbished high-security detention center run by the Afghan military outside Kabul.

But almost a year after the Afghan detention center opened, American officials say it can hold only about half the prisoners they once planned to put there. As a result, the makeshift American site at Bagram will probably continue to operate with hundreds of detainees for the foreseeable future, the officials said.

Meanwhile, the treatment of some prisoners on the Bagram base has prompted a strong complaint to the Pentagon from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the only outside group allowed in the detention center.

In a confidential memorandum last summer, the Red Cross said dozens of prisoners had been held incommunicado for weeks or even months in a previously undisclosed warren of isolation cells at Bagram, two American officials said. The Red Cross said the prisoners were kept from its inspectors and sometimes subjected to cruel treatment in violation of the

Geneva Conventions, one of the officials said.

The senior Pentagon official for detention policy, Sandra L. Hodgkinson, would not discuss the complaint, citing the confidentiality of communications with the Red Cross. She said that the organization had access to “all Department of Defense detainees” in Afghanistan, after they were formally registered, and that the military “makes every effort to register detainees as soon as practicable after capture, normally within two weeks.

“In some cases, due to a variety of logistical and operational circumstances, it may take longer,” Ms. Hodgkinson added.

The obstacles American officials have faced in their plan to “transition out” of the Bagram detention center underscore the complexity of their challenges in dealing with prisoners overseas. Yet even as Bagram has expanded over the last three years, it has received a fraction of the attention that policy makers, Congress and human rights groups have devoted to Guantánamo.

“The problem at Bagram hasn’t gone away,” said Tina M. Foster, a New York human rights lawyer who has filed federal lawsuits on behalf of the detainees at Bagram. “The government has just done a better job of keeping it secret.”

The rising number of detainees at Bagram — up from barely 100 in early 2004 and about 500 early last year — has been driven primarily by the deepening war in Afghanistan. American

officials said that all but about 30 of those prisoners are Afghans, most of them Taliban fighters captured in raids or on the battlefield.

But the surging detainee population also reflects a series of unforeseen problems in the United States’ effort to turn over prisoners to the Afghan government.

In a confidential diplomatic agreement in

August 2005, a draft of which was obtained by The New York Times, the Bush administration said it would transfer the detainees if the Kabul government gave written assurances that it would treat the detainees humanely and abide by elaborate security conditions. As part of the accord, the United States said it would finance the rebuilding of an Afghan prison block and help equip and train an Afghan guard force.

Yet even before the construction began in early 2006, the creation of the new Afghan National Detention Center was complicated by turf battles among Afghan government ministries, some of which resisted the American strategy, officials of both countries said.

A push by some Defense Department officials to have Kabul authorize the indefinite military detention of “enemy combatants” — adopting a legal framework like that of Guantánamo — foundered in 2006 when aides to President Hamid Karzai persuaded him not to sign a decree that had been written with American help.

Then, last May, the transfer plan was disrupted again when the two American servicemen overseeing the project were shot to death by a man suspected of being a Taliban militant who had infiltrated the guard force.

The Pentagon initially reported only that the two Americans, Col. James W. Harrison Jr. and Master Sgt. Wilberto Sabalu Jr., were killed May 6 by “small-arms fire.” But American officials said the Afghan guard had opened fire with a semiautomatic rifle as two vehicles carrying senior officers waited to pass through the prison gate. The killings forced more than a month of further vetting of the Afghan guards and the dismissal of almost two dozen trained recruits, Pentagon officials said.

A Spartan Site of Metal Pens

The Bagram Theater Internment Facility, as it is called, has held prisoners captured as far away as Central Africa and Southeast Asia, many of whom were sent on to Guantánamo. Since the flow of detainees to Cuba was largely shut off in September 2004, the Bagram detention center has become primarily a repository for more dangerous prisoners captured in Afghanistan.

Despite some expansion and renovation, the detention center remains a crude place where most prisoners are fenced into large metal pens, military officers and former detainees have said.

Military personnel who know both Bagram and Guantánamo describe the Afghan site, on an American-controlled military base 40 miles north of Kabul, as far more spartan. Bagram prisoners have fewer privileges, less ability to contest their detention and no access to lawyers. Some detainees have been held without charge for more than five years, officials said.

The treatment of prisoners at Bagram has generally improved in recent years, human rights groups and former detainees say, particularly since two Afghan detainees died there in December 2002 after being beaten by their American captors. Two American officials familiar with the Red Cross complaint that was forwarded to the Pentagon over the summer described it as a notable exception.

A Red Cross spokesman in Washington, Simon Schorno, said the organization would not comment on its discussions with the Defense Department. But in remarks about the organization’s work in Afghanistan, its director of operations, Pierre Kraehenbuehl, emphasized on Dec. 13 that “not all places of detention and detainees” are made available to the group’s

inspectors.

“The fact that the I.C.R.C. does not publicize its findings does not indicate satisfaction with the conditions of any given detention place,” he said on the group’s Web site.

The two United States officials, who insisted on anonymity because of the confidentiality of Red Cross communications, suggested that the organization had been more forceful in private. They said the group had complained that detainees in the isolation area were sometimes subjected to harsh interrogations and were not reported to Red Cross inspectors until after they were moved into the main Bagram detention center and formally registered — after being held incommunicado for as long as several months.

One former Bush administration official said the Pentagon told Congressional leaders in September 2006 that a small number of prisoners held by Special Operations forces might not be registered within the 14-day period cited in a Defense Department directive issued that month. The exceptions were to be “approved at the highest levels,” the former official said.

Discounting Complaints

Bush administration officials have at times discounted complaints about the crowding and harsh conditions at Bagram by saying the detention center was never meant to be permanent and that its prisoners would soon be turned over to Afghanistan.

Hundreds of Bagram detainees have been released outright as part of an Afghan national reconciliation program. But by early 2006, internal Defense Department statistics showed that the average internment at Bagram was 14.5 months, and one Pentagon official said that figure had since risen.

After a White House agreement by President Bush and Mr. Karzai in May 2005, the plan to transfer the

prisoners was drawn up by administration officials and outlined in an exchange of confidential diplomatic notes that August.

The two-page Washington note — the first document to become public showing the terms that Washington has sought from other governments for the transfer of detainees from Guantánamo and Bagram — asks the Kabul administration to share any intelligence information from the prisoners, “utilize all methods appropriate and permissible under Afghan law to surveil or monitor their activities following any release,” and “confiscate or deny passports and take measures to prevent each national from traveling outside Afghanistan.”

At the time, some Bush administration officials predicted that transfers from Bagram could begin within six months. Col. Manuel Supervielle, who worked on legal aspects of the transfers as the senior United States military lawyer in Afghanistan, recalled that officials in Washington expected the primary difficulty to be the rebuilding of a cellblock at Afghanistan’s decrepit Pul-i-Charkhi prison to meet international standards of humane treatment.

“We’ve got a bunch of guys we want to hand over to the Afghans,” Colonel Supervielle said, recalling the prevailing view. “Build a jail and hand them over.”

But complications emerged at almost every turn.

Afghan officials rejected pressure from Washington to adopt a detention system modeled on the Bush administration’s “enemy combatant” legal framework, American officials said. Some Defense Department officials even urged the Afghan military to set up military commissions like those at Guantánamo, the officials said.

Officials of both countries said the defense minister,

Abdul Rahim Wardak, was reluctant to take responsibility for the new detention center as the Pentagon wanted, fearing he would be besieged by tribal leaders trying to secure the release of captives. The minister of justice, Sarwar Danish, opposed sharing his control over prisons, the officials said.

American officials finally brokered an agreement between the ministries, internal documents show. But that did not resolve more basic questions about the legal basis under which Afghanistan would hold the detainees.

For nearly a year, American military officials and diplomats worked with the Afghan government to draft a plan for how it would detain and prosecute all prisoners captured in Afghanistan. Colonel Supervielle, who had helped set up legal operations at Guantánamo, said the effort in Afghanistan was in some ways more complex. “You weren’t dealing just with a U.S. interagency process,” he said. “It involved the interagency process, bilateral relations with Afghanistan, the military coalition and other international interests.”

The draft law was finally delivered to Mr. Karzai in August 2006. Despite American entreaties, he decided not to sign it after opposition from senior aides, officials said.

The construction of a new detention center at Pul-i-Charkhi also proved more complicated than United States officials had anticipated.

A New Project Is Flawed

When Afghan contractors broke ground on the \$20 million project in 2006, United States officials estimated that the center would hold as many as 670 prisoners. But as the military police colonel overseeing the project toured the site with Afghan and Red Cross officials, they pointed to a significant flaw. In other parts of Pul-i-Charkhi, men were crammed as many as

eight to a cell, and used toilets down the hall. To improve security and hygiene, the Americans equipped each two-man cell in the new block with its own toilet.

But because the cultural modesty of Afghan men would make them uncomfortable sharing an open toilet, it was subsequently decided that the prisoners should be held individually, two former officials involved in the project said. That immediately reduced the optimal capacity of the main prison to about 330 detainees, they said, although a Pentagon spokeswoman said its “maximum capacity” was 628 prisoners.

The training of Afghan military personnel to guard and administer the new prison has posed other challenges. After initially budgeting \$6 million for guard training, the Defense Department decided it would need about \$18 million for training and “mentoring” of guards over three years, officials said.

A first group of 12 Bagram detainees was moved into the Pul-i-Charkhi prison on April 3. Over the next nine months, that number rose to 157 prisoners, including 32 from Guantánamo, official statistics show. Afghan officials decided to release 12 of those detainees soon after their transfer.

American officials said the modest flow had been dictated mainly by the Afghan military, which has wanted to make sure its guards could handle the new arrivals. But some United States officials say they have also had to reassess the Afghans’ ability to hold more dangerous detainees. They said the detention center at Bagram would probably continue to hold hundreds of prisoners indefinitely. “The idea is that over time, some of our detainees at Bagram — especially those at the lower end of the threat scale — will be passed on to Afghanistan,” one senior military official said last year. “But not all. Bagram

will remain an intelligence asset and a screening area.”

Ms. Hodgkinson, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for detainee affairs, acknowledged that the military was holding more detainees at Bagram than it had anticipated two years ago and that the Pentagon had no plan to assist the Afghans with further prison-building. But, she added, “A final decision on the higher-threat detainees has not yet been made.”

And even now, the legal basis under which prisoners are being held at the Afghan detention center remains unclear. Another Defense Department official, who insisted on anonymity because she was not authorized to publicly discuss the issue, said the detentions had been authorized “in a note from the attorney general stating that he recognizes that they have the legal authority under the law of war to hold enemy combatants as security threats if they choose to do so.”

Afghan officials said they were still expecting virtually all of the Afghan prisoners held by the United States — with the possible exception of a few especially dangerous detainees at Guantánamo — to be handed over to them.

A spokesman for the Afghan Defense Ministry, Gen. Zaher Azimi, said, “What is agreed is that all the detainees should be transferred.”

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Pg. 10

11. Why Anthropologists Are Reluctant Army Recruits

By Elaine Monaghan, CQ Staff

Anthropologists are the original participant-observers, but they don't much like what they're seeing — and what some members of their profession are doing — at the behest of the Department of Defense.

In February 2007, the

Pentagon started embedding anthropologists in its brigades in Afghanistan and Iraq as part of an ambitious effort called the Human Terrain System. The idea, Defense Department officials say, is to refine the cultural understanding of U.S. forces so as to promote “non-kinetic” — i.e., non-violent — modes of conflict resolution in their ranks. For example, the ability to recognize the Iraqi hand signal for “stop” — a hand held parallel to the ground as opposed to the Western gesture of a palm raised in the air — could greatly reduce civilian casualties at occupation checkpoints. Presently, embedded anthropologists have joined five units in Iraq and one in Afghanistan, of a planned 22 and four respectively, that Defense hopes ultimately to deploy.

But some anthropologists contend that their colleagues should vacate the Human Terrain, since it would potentially breach the profession's code of ethics, which pledges to do no harm to native populations it studies. The Network of Concerned Anthropologists, an ad hoc coalition opposed to the project, has publicized a presentation by Assistant Deputy Undersecretary of Defense John Wilcox before a “Precision Strike Winter Roundtable” last February; there, Wilcox used a PowerPoint display indicating that the Human Terrain project “enables the entire kill chain for the GWOT (global war on terrorism).”

Such talk puts anthropologists in mind of the Defense Department's Vietnam-era forays into the study of native populations. The Network of Concerned Anthropologists notes that the Pentagon has likened the program to the Vietnam conflict's Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program, which secretly lifted the work of anthropologists that was

subsequently used, says David Price, an anthropologist at St. Martin's University in Lacey, Wash., to help kill thousands of Viet Cong.

Anthropologists in the Network are circulating a petition pledging not to take part in the Human Terrain project. They have gathered about 1,000 signatures after making the rounds at the American Anthropological Association's annual conference in Washington last month. The debate over the program acquired a new level of intrigue at the conference when a pair of Defense officials representing Human Terrain were seen copying the names of some pledge signatories. To further stoke suspicions among the anthropologists, one of those name-takers was Laurie Adler, a Human Terrain consultant who came into some notoriety in 2005 as a spokeswoman for the Lincoln Group, a public relations firm caught planting favorable propaganda about the American occupation in Iraqi newspapers.

Adler, communicating through Army spokesman Thomas McCuin, says she was just culling names of fellow graduates from her alma mater, the University of Chicago, so as to clue them in on the Human Terrain System's virtues. However, Hugh Gusterson, an anthropology and sociology professor at George Mason University, another original signatory to the pledge, notes that as of the third week of December, the petition had 22 signatures associated with the university, and only one had originated from the annual meeting. Gusterson reports that Adler was seen writing down multiple names; she has subsequently denied that account, claiming that she wrote just one name alongside other notes on the same page.

In a separate report on the Human Terrain initiative released in late November, the American Anthropological

Association called it “certainly the most ethically fraught” form of anthropological engagement with the military and intelligence sectors. But the report concluded that it was up to individual association members to decide whether to take part in Human Terrain or in any similar programs in the national-security sector.

For its part, the Pentagon doesn't understand what all the fuss is about. “Frankly, I am baffled that people oppose the Army's efforts to find non-lethal ways to achieve our goals,” says McCuin. Perhaps military communication with the profession of anthropology is a rich topic for future anthropological study.

Federal Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. 3

12. Union Asks High Court To Hear Pentagon Suit

The American Federation of Government Employees plans to take its fight against the Pentagon's new personnel system to the Supreme Court.

AFGE said it would on Jan. 7 file a writ of certiorari — an appeal asking the nation's highest court to hear the case — challenging the National Security Personnel System.

NSPS allows the Defense Department to discipline poor performers without offering them time to improve and to pay employees based on their performance rather than through the General Schedule.

Unions also object to NSPS provisions that allow Defense to assign employees new responsibilities without first bargaining with their unions. But the Defense authorization bill, still under consideration by Congress, would restore unions' rights to collectively bargain on NSPS.

A federal appeals court sided with the Pentagon in a 2007 ruling. The appeals court overturned a 2006 U.S. District

Court decision that found the Pentagon's rules went beyond its authority.

USA Today
January 7, 2008
Pg. 1

13. Katrina Victims Swamp Corps For Trillions In Claims

247 filings seek \$1 billion or more

By Brad Heath, USA Today

WASHINGTON — Tens of thousands of people whose property was destroyed when Hurricane Katrina overwhelmed New Orleans' protective levees have filed claims demanding the government pay astronomical sums that would be enough money to make multimillionaires of everyone in Louisiana.

The Army Corps of Engineers received 247 claims from residents, businesses and government agencies seeking \$1 billion or more, according to the agency. That's the tip of a very large iceberg: The corps, which designed and built the city's storm protections, faces more than 489,000 claims for the damage and deaths in the post-Katrina flooding.

The claims are so massive the government could never hope to pay them. Rather, they are the hopeful — and at times inflated — requests of people reeling from losses.

Just the top filings add up to so much money that the entire annual output of the nation's economy — \$12 trillion — couldn't pay them off, according to the corps' listing. It is the first public accounting of the scale of damage demands the corps faces.

"That's totally off-the-wall," says Ashton O'Dwyer, a New Orleans lawyer handling some of the claims. He says everyone making a claim ultimately must provide evidence to back it up, "and we won't know the real total until that happens."

By comparison, the Louisiana Recovery Authority estimates that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 together caused about \$100 billion in physical damage statewide. The federal government already dedicated more than \$130 billion on recovery from the hurricanes.

Most of the claims allege that the corps is to blame for the levee failures that inundated huge sections of New Orleans. A claim form is the first step in seeking compensation.

One claim alone seeks \$3 quadrillion in damages, almost all of it for personal injury. That's a 3 followed by 15 zeros — about 250 times the nation's gross domestic product. A resident of a section of New Orleans that includes the hard-hit Lower 9th Ward filed another claim for \$6 trillion, double the annual federal budget.

"We sort of take it all in stride," says Angela Drinkwitz, the corps' claims administrator. "We don't say there's no way this could be true."

Most claims should be filed within two years, but Drinkwitz says new claims are still trickling in.

Neither the corps nor the Justice Department would say whether they intend to pay any of the damage claims, how they will be processed or when a decision could be made. Already, at least 300 people also have sued the government over levee failures, Justice Department spokesman Andrew Ames says.

"If they'd built the levees right, they wouldn't have this problem," says Daniel Becnel, a Reserve, La., lawyer representing some of those suing the government.

The corps would not identify the people filing large claims. Officials still must sift through more than 2 tons of paperwork to weed out duplicates.

Flood of paperwork

Damage claims against the Army Corps of Engineers after

levees failed:

*Total number: 489,000

*Claims for \$1 billion or more: 247

*Largest: \$3 quadrillion

*Largest government or business claim: \$586 billion

New York Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. C5

14. In Blog, A Military Man Writes About His Own Death

By Brian Stelter

Andrew Olmsted, a United States Army major who wrote an online blog for The Rocky Mountain News, prepared for the possibility of his death by writing a 3,000-word piece.

"I'm dead," he wrote in July 2007 as he arrived in Iraq for an 18-month tour of duty. "But if you're reading this, you're not, so take a moment to enjoy that happy fact."

The major, who was 38, was killed Jan. 3 by small-arms fire from insurgents in Sadiyah, 100 miles northeast of Baghdad. The next day, a fellow blogger published Major Olmsted's eloquent essay, leading to an outpouring of comments from more than 1,000 readers. His blog became exponentially more popular in death than in life, garnering more than 100,000 page views on Saturday.

Major Olmsted was one of the first "milbloggers," an Internet term for members of the military who blog. Thousands of readers had followed his posts for more than five years, first on AndrewOlmsted.com and later on the Web site of The Rocky Mountain News, a newspaper in Colorado.

While bloggers have died in war zones before, several prominent military bloggers said they could not recall any previous instances of posthumous blog entries. Major Olmsted's final post interspersed quotes from Plato and the movie "Team America" with reflections on

his life and requests from his readers. He specifically asked that his death not be used for political purposes.

"We're all going to die of something," Major Olmsted wrote in his final post. "I died doing a job I loved. When your time comes, I hope you are as fortunate as I was."

The ending of the post was almost uncomfortably personal, with a message to his wife of 10 years, concluding with "I love you."

In March Major Olmsted approached his friend Hilary Bok, a professor at Johns Hopkins University, and asked if she would publish a post for him if he died during the war. She said she immediately agreed. He sent a rough draft at the beginning of June, and kept redrafting until July 15, the day he arrived in Baghdad.

"When I first read it, I cried," Ms. Bok said.

In the essay, simply titled "Final Post," Major Olmsted acknowledged that he would miss blogging.

"The nature of blogging, the exchange of ideas, was something he really enjoyed," said David Montero, a Rocky Mountain News reporter who had spent several days with Major Olmsted for a front-page profile in June.

Before Major Olmsted left for Iraq, he met with the newspaper's editors to discuss moving his blog to the newspaper's Web site. The Army approved the arrangement, and he posted at least 38 times while in Kuwait and Iraq.

"He was building up a regular readership among people who appreciated his frontline view from the war," said Deb Goeken, the managing editor of the newspaper.

Army Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 8

15. On The Mend

Army disability retirement system better

By Kelly Kennedy

When Lt. Col. Chip Pierce served as troop commander at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, he said he was “frustrated” by some of the issues he saw his injured soldiers face as they made their way through the bureaucracy of the Army’s military disability retirement system.

“At Tripler, we didn’t have the same volume [of soldiers] as Walter Reed [Army Medical Center], so we didn’t have the same level of problems,” he said. “But nearly every problem they had, we had a little of it.”

In some cases, he didn’t know where to turn to solve a problem, he said. And he “wasn’t satisfied” with the troops’ living quarters.

So when the Army offered Pierce the opportunity to lead its new Warrior Transition Unit, a brigade designed specifically to address the administrative needs of injured soldiers, “I couldn’t get here fast enough,” Pierce said.

That was last spring. Already, he said, he’s seen progress.

In February, Army Times reported that soldiers languished for months — even years — in the medical hold system, facing bureaucratic tangles as they worked their way toward the physical evaluation board to determine their disability rating for retirement pay.

The stories, as well as reports from the Pentagon Inspector’s General and Government Accountability Office and testimony of injured soldiers before Congress, brought about a series of investigations and planned changes. And the new Warrior Transition Unit meant officials could immediately put some of those changes into effect.

“Before, folks didn’t feel they had the power to make change,” Pierce said, referring to a stifling set of 50-year-old policies and procedures. “Now, everyone is an advocate for change. If something isn’t

working, they can fix it.”

Since then, the Army has added staff, improved training for counselors and lawyers, and ensured every soldier has someone overseeing his or her progress through the system.

And Building 18 — Walter Reed’s dilapidated symbol of the breakdown in the system — no longer houses wounded soldiers.

“I’ve been fortunate to be able to see the frustrations and bring them up to this level,” Pierce said. “It’s been very satisfying to be in this position.”

Increase in medically retired

While the number of soldiers medically retired — meaning they received a disability rating of 30 percent or higher or had at least 18 years of service when they went through the disability process — declined from 2005 to 2006, it increased by several hundred in 2007, according to figures provide by Col. Carlton Buchanan, deputy commander of the Army’s Physical Disability Agency.

Moreover, Buchanan said, while 270 fewer soldiers were medically retired in 2006 than in 2005, the percentage of those completing the evaluation process who were medically retired went up over that time, and has continued to rise in 2007:

*In 2005, 13,048 soldiers went through the process and 2,232 were medically retired, about 17.1 percent.

*In 2006, 10,460 soldiers went through the process and 1,956 were medically retired, about 18.7 percent.

*And in 2007, 10,400 soldiers went through the process and 2,397 were medically retired — about 23 percent.

The 8,003 soldiers who weren’t medically retired in 2007 either were found fit and remained in the Army, were awarded a lump-sum severance payment based on rank and years of service, or were separated without benefits if

their condition was found to be pre-existing and they hadn’t been in the military for at least seven years.

Pierce said about 8,900 soldiers remain in the Warrior Transition Unit waiting for their final disability evaluation board.

Tracking individuals

Things still aren’t perfect; Pierce said it’s hard to judge how soldiers feel about the improvements because they weren’t in the system a year ago. And there are still cases taking longer than they should to go through the process.

But now, rather than justifying a months-long quagmire, as had been done by other officials in the past, Pierce said his office tracks, by name, every soldier whose transition takes longer than 60 days. Prior to the 60-day mark, soldiers’ squad leaders in the Warrior Transition Units are responsible for making sure soldiers move through as quickly as possible.

The GAO reported in the fall that some transition units are only at half staffing, but Pierce said the necessary ratio of staff to injured soldiers is at the right levels. In some cases, he said, the GAO report called for staffing for 100 injured soldiers when there may have only been 25 soldiers in the unit.

The Marine Corps also stood up a Wounded Warriors regiment last spring to keep track of Marines and sailors going through the disability retirement system. Though the Navy and the Marine Corps have a better track record for getting service members through the process, there have been worries about the equity of their ratings system.

An Army Times investigation last spring found that enlisted Marines lag far behind enlisted sailors and airmen in the size of the average disability payments they are awarded.

Soldiers, Marines still lag

The 2006 data released by the Defense Department’s

Office of the Actuary show Marines and soldiers continue to lag, even though they have higher injury rates and could be expected to have a greater proportion of serious injuries because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan than do sailors or airmen. Their ranks and times in service were also comparable.

The average monthly disability payments for all enlisted members receiving disability pay from the military in 2006: Air Force: \$963; Navy: \$845; Army: \$792; Marine Corps: \$774

Officers had similar discrepancies: Air Force: \$2,668; Navy: \$2,392; Marine Corps: \$2,336; Army: \$2,067

According to the Office of the Actuary, the number of Marines medically retired in 2006 went up by about 200 compared with the previous year — far more than any other service. The Marine Corps did not comment on the figures by press time.

The Air Force and Navy also saw increases in permanent disability retirements from 2005 to 2006 of 125 airmen and 36 sailors.

Buchanan said part of the reason for the Army’s increase of more than 400 disability retirements in 2007 was that combat-related injuries rose to 18 percent from about 15 percent the year before.

Among soldiers going through the military disability evaluation process, more than half of those with combat-related injuries are retired, Buchanan said.

Another reason for the increase, he said, is “increased training of physicians and adjudicators, coupled with greater precision in describing injuries, such as scars, muscle and nerve injuries, as well as mental disorders.”

That gives medical boards better information to determine proper disability percentages, he said.

January 6, 2008

Pg. 1

16. Why Have Fort Monroe Costs Soared?

By David Lerman

WASHINGTON -- Two local members of Congress are pressing the Pentagon to explain why the cost of closing Hampton's Fort Monroe has increased 298 percent.

Reps. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, D-Newport News, and Thelma Drake, R-Norfolk, have sent a letter to the Defense Department. They are demanding to know why costs have increased to an estimated \$288 million and whether the initial estimate considered the expense of environmental cleanup.

The historic post, headquarters for the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, is scheduled to close by 2011, part of a large streamlining approved by Congress that will shutter about 22 major bases nationwide.

Cleaning up Monroe is expected to be costly because the moat-encircled fort is thought to be littered with unexploded munitions.

The Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, issued a report last month showing the cost of closing the Army fort has risen from a 2005 estimate of \$72.4 million to a 2008 budget estimate of \$288.1 million. The GAO report didn't make clear why the cost increased.

"How can the current estimated cost increase be explained?" Scott and Drake asked in a letter to Alex Beehler, acting deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment.

The letter said, "In light of the recent reports, we hereby request that you provide us with the cost estimates that were used to justify the closure, the source of those estimates and the amount of projected savings which would justify the closure."

Fort Monroe was cited as one of about 33 base closures or realignments that now face significant cost increases from projections made in 2005, when Congress approved the closure round.

The Defense Department, in response to the GAO, acknowledged the cost increases. It attributed them to everything from inflation to new construction costs, changes in building needs and decisions to enhance training sites or military quality of life. It didn't respond specifically to the case of Monroe.

Despite the cost increases, the Pentagon defended the base closure effort, saying it will still save taxpayers \$4 billion a year when completed.

A Scott aide said Friday that the congressman hadn't received a response from the Pentagon yet to his letter, which was dated Dec. 20.

Fort Monroe had been targeted for closure for about two decades before Congress approved the move two years ago. In the past, lawmakers saved the fort by arguing that the high cost of environmental cleanup made closure impractical and a net cost drain on the Pentagon.

In recommending the closure of Monroe, the Defense Department issued a report in 2005 that acknowledged the need for environmental cleanup. But it said it didn't consider that expense to be triggered by a closure of the fort.

"Because the Department has a legal obligation to perform environmental restoration, regardless of whether an installation is closed, realigned or remains open, no cost for environmental remediate (sic) was included in the payback calculation," the report said.

In a report issued a year ago, the GAO reported the cleanup cost of Monroe as \$201 million.

Washington Post

January 7, 2008

Pg. 15

Fine Print

17. The Long And Winding Road

By Walter Pincus

In 1996, the Marine Corps Combat Development Command determined that its expeditionary forces needed an agile and mobile weapon to fire over the enemy's front lines, a concept quickly dubbed Dragon Fire.

More than 11 years later, full production of the system that officials chose still has not been approved and the decision has been delayed yet again, until spring. In the intervening years, its cost has risen modestly but could increase much more.

The tale of the project, officially named the Expeditionary Fire Support System (EFSS), provides a short course on how new and costly weapons systems evolve. Its journey through the bureaucracy is described in a Dec. 21, 2007, Government Accountability Office report prepared for Sen. Carl M. Levin (D-Mich.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

In 1999, the Marines conceived of the EFSS as one vehicle towing a 120mm mortar and another towing an ammunition trailer. Both would be transportable aboard the CH53E helicopter, as well as the V-22 Osprey vertical lift aircraft, which itself was being developed.

The idea was that with its four- to 12-mile range, the 120mm mortar would give a mobile Marine expeditionary force the ability to fly deep into enemy territory and carry on fighting without long-range artillery support.

After years of study and design competitions, the Marine Corps Systems Command authorized a plan in 2003 to acquire test models of the EFSS. The Pentagon sought contractors who could provide a single vehicle

capable of towing the mortar or its ammunition carrier and fitting inside the CH53E or the Osprey.

In 2004, the Marines approved initial cost and schedule estimates -- roughly \$670 million for the system and a 2006 operational capability -- and a \$12 million initial contract for test models was signed with the competition winner, General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems.

Delays and cost increases began shortly thereafter, according to the GAO. Delays occurred because "the Marine Corps was optimistic in its belief that using commercial off-the-shelf systems with some modifications could provide a solution to meet the need for an internally transportable system."

Marine Corps officials had asked for a quick production schedule because they wanted the EFSS ready for deployment with the first Marine Expeditionary Unit that got the Osprey. But the Osprey itself ran behind schedule.

Design changes required to fit the vehicle inside the Osprey at the correct weight took place at the same time the first models were being delivered to the Marines. The additional developmental work required the Marines to take more risk and change from a fixed-price contract to one that promised reimbursement of the contractor's costs, the GAO said.

In addition, what the GAO called "noncritical" changes in requirements were made. They included reducing the trailers' basic ammunition load from the original 50 to 100 rounds to 34 rounds. The Marines told the GAO that the initial load was "a concept," not a "requirement." Another costly change was raising the vehicle's on-road speed to 35 miles per hour.

In 2007, the EFSS received flight certification for both aircraft, and by July operational testing was

completed. Although the system met its key performance parameters and 13 of 14 critical requirements, it also "experienced several safety, performance and reliability problems during testing," the GAO reported.

The GAO noted that after the contract was awarded, the Marines reduced the required sustained rate of fire "from four rounds per minute to two rounds per minute." The Marine program office said that change was due "to a typographical error found in the requirements documentation," according to the GAO. But during testing, "it did not meet the critical requirement related to maximum rate of fire," the GAO added.

The GAO also noted that EFSS vehicles carried all required equipment, "but not securely." Three incidents occurred during testing that involved potential risk of injury to a crew member riding in the rear seat of the ammunition trailer, the GAO said. The vehicle's cooling system did not work well and no extreme cold weather testing was conducted.

As a result of the deficiencies, the director of the Marine Corps Operational Test and Examination Activity termed the EFSS "a 'niche' capability." He recommended that the deficiencies be addressed and more testing be done before deploying the system.

The initial cost of the EFSS has so far increased just \$15.5 million, to \$691.2 million in 2007. But as the GAO noted, the final costs are not in. Under the current contract, the government is at risk because there is little incentive for the "contractor to control costs until the terms of the work are finalized," according to the GAO.

The cost of 20 years of ammunition is projected at more than \$501.7 million, making the EFSS a program costing more than \$1 billion.

The need for further testing will delay initial operational deployment to spring, according to the GAO. If all goes well, the EFSS will still be deployed with the first Marine Expeditionary Unit to have the Osprey, because initial deployment of the aircraft "is currently projected to take place in the fall of 2008," according to the GAO.

National security and intelligence reporter Walter Pincus pores over the speeches, reports, transcripts and other documents that flood Washington and every week uncovers the fine print that rarely makes headlines -- but should.

Tacoma News Tribune
January 6, 2008

18. C-17 Mission Completed

By Scott Fontaine

Near the bottom of the globe, an American crew took off from a New Zealand runway to help a stranded British ship. And after a drop above one of the most treacherous reaches of the Earth, airmen from McChord Air Force Base were the heroes.

The Argos Georgia, a British fishing trawler, has been stuck since Christmas Eve amid floes near the Ross Ice Shelf deep below the Antarctic Circle. A broken engine piston left the ship without main power for six days. Dangerous icebergs weren't far off. Two low-pressure systems were approaching the area, and Lt. Col. Jim McGann, the commander of Operation Deep Freeze, didn't need Doppler radar to know that the trawler's 25-person crew was in trouble.

"You could see two big sets of dark clouds coming in," he said Saturday by phone from Christchurch, New Zealand. "And once that gets rocking, those icebergs look even more dangerous. Those guys were going to be in a lot of trouble if they didn't get any help."

Other options to save the stranded crew would take at least 10 days, so on Friday night, a C-17 Globemaster III with an Air Force crew comprised of units from McChord Air Force Base took off from Christchurch, and dropped the engine parts to the trawler.

McGann received a call Friday from the New Zealand Rescue Coordination Center asking for help. The request from the owner of the ship's company went through several layers of bureaucracy – submitted through the British Embassy, and then approved by Pacific Command, Transportation Command and the Air Mobility Command – before the situation was designated an emergency and approved.

This time, the machine worked quickly.

"They approved it in 18 hours," he said. "That's pretty spectacular."

The airmen bought the engine parts from a Christchurch marine store and picked up parachutes from McMurdo Station in Antarctica. Crews put the equipment on a pallet and attached buoys to it. The C-17 flew at about 135 mph and as low as 300 feet above the surface as it approached the ship, and it dropped the 15-by-71/2-foot pallet at just after 10 p.m. New Zealand time. The Argos Georgia crew recovered the shipment in about five minutes. The mission took about 10 hours.

"I've flown more than 50 missions down here, and yesterday's mission was one of the most spectacular I've ever flown," McGann said.

The 118-foot vessel, registered in the British overseas territory of St. Helena in the South Atlantic, was on a long-haul fishing expedition.

Operation Deep Freeze is a joint mission with crews from the 62nd and 446th airlift wings based at McChord Air Force Base assisting the National Science Foundation

and the U.S. Antarctic Program. They're there six months a year to fly supplies to research stations in Antarctica.

"We have a motto: 'Global Reach,'" McGann said. "And yesterday's mission demonstrates that we can be anywhere in the world in hours. It demonstrated we can do it, and that we do do it."

Washington Post
January 7, 2008
Pg. D1

Federal Diary

19. The Many Factors Behind 2008's Bigger Raise For Federal Workers

By Stephen Barr

What a difference a year makes.

At the start of 2007, federal employees received an average raise of 2.2 percent, with about half receiving a 1.8 percent raise.

This year, federal employees will see their pay rise by an average of 3.5 percent. About half will get a 2.99 percent raise.

The differences in the raises largely can be attributed to the political process on Capitol Hill. At the end of 2006, Congress had not completed most of the annual appropriations bill and left it to President Bush to set the 2007 raise. Last month, Congress put together a consolidated spending bill and got Bush's signature before the year ended.

To be sure, the 2008 raise, ratified by Bush in an executive order Friday, was shaped by other considerations.

Those factors included data on wage growth in the private sector, a desire in Congress to give a solid raise to the armed forces during a war and efforts by Washington area members of Congress to renew support for the civil service, where baby-boom retirements are on the rise and agencies are finding it tougher to compete with the private

sector for top talent.

"I know from having advocated for federal employees since I came to Congress that it's easier to rail against 'Washington bureaucrats' than to recognize the invaluable contributions these dedicated public servants make," Rep. Thomas M. Davis III (R-Va.) said in a written statement.

Federal employees, he said, "protect the homeland, fight crime, battle disease, ensure the wide variety of government functions on which we all depend operate properly and support our troops abroad."

House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.) played a pivotal role in moving this year's raise through Congress and said he was pleased that Bush took the final step to put the raise in place. "This adjustment will reap significant dividends both in terms of the morale of our federal workforce and in our efforts to recruit and retain vital government personnel," Hoyer said.

Washington area House members and senators "fought hard to secure a fair pay adjustment this year, and we will continue to do so in the future because we believe federal employees deserve compensation equal to that of the great contributions they make in service to this nation," he said.

The government's method of allocating the annual raise -- a 2.5 percent across-the-board increase and a geographic-based adjustment -- is helping federal employees in the Washington region. The government gives higher raises to certain metropolitan areas where officials think there is a sizable "pay gap" between the federal and private sectors.

As a result, federal employees here will receive a 4.49 percent increase this year. In the Washington area, the projected median federal salary will be \$90,698. Last year, Washington area federal

employees received a 2.64 percent raise.

The annual raise has pushed the top of the General Schedule scale, which covers most federal workers, to \$149,000 in the Washington area. By law, General Schedule pay cannot exceed that of assistant secretaries and general counsels of departments and heads of smaller agencies, known as Executive Schedule Level IV.

Washington joins 11 other areas with federal employees at the upper end of the General Schedule scale who have hit the statutory cap on salaries. The other cities include Boston; Chicago; Denver; Houston; New York; and key parts of California, including Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego. Because their pay is linked to the Executive Schedule, the pay of these employees will increase by a smaller percentage than that of most other federal employees or remain flat.

Increasingly, rank-and-file employees are bumping into the executive pay scale because of their annual geographic adjustments, known as locality pay. Cabinet officials and others paid on the Executive Schedule do not receive locality pay, and the increases in that pay scale have not kept pace with General Schedule raises in recent years.

Members of the Senior Executive Service, a group of about 6,000 senior managers in the government, also do not receive locality pay and are not guaranteed an annual raise. Bush's executive order raises the minimum salary of a federal executive by 2.5 percent, allowing executives to earn \$114,468 to \$172,200.

With more rank-and-file employees being offered the potential to earn up to \$149,000 in big cities, some officials are concerned that some talented employees will pass up a chance to compete for an executive position, since they do not come with guaranteed raises and do not

have as many job protections as a regular federal position.

J. David Cox, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of Government Employees, applauded the step by Congress to increase federal pay over Bush's initial proposal. Employees at the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs will face a challenging year because of the Iraq war, and Social Security Administration employees are stretched thin in field offices where workloads are expanding, he said.

"Federal employees deserve it," Cox said.

Washington Times

January 7, 2008

Pg. 1

20. Kenya 'Critical' To U.S. Military

Instability hits anti-terror ally

By Rowan Scarborough,

Washington Times

A destabilized Kenya would deprive the United States of one of its staunchest allies in Africa, because Nairobi since September 11 has provided military bases, communications networks and intelligence-sharing to prevent al Qaeda from making inroads on the continent.

"For the eastern portion of Africa, Kenya is critical," said retired Marine Lt. Gen. Michael DeLong, a former deputy commander of U.S. Central Command, which oversees U.S. military operations on the Horn of Africa.

"They are strategically located in the area bordering Somalia," he said. "They were critical for us in Somalia in the early 1990s. Without them, we could not have operated. They allowed us to use their bases while we were conducting operations in and out of Somalia, and they still allow us to use those bases today."

A failed state in Kenya, as exists in Somalia, would erase "one of the top friendly militaries to the United States

in Africa," the retired three-star general said.

The prospect of a destabilized Kenya arose in recent weeks in the aftermath of a contested Dec. 27 election that kept President Mwai Kibaki in power. International observers reported ballot-counting irregularities. Street violence broke out in the capital of Nairobi, killing more than 300.

Alarmed, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice dispatched her top African diplomat to Kenya to urge reconciliation between the opposing parties. U.S. envoy Jendayi E. Frazer met Saturday with Mr. Kibaki, who announced a power-sharing proposal in an effort to end the crisis.

"What we have here is one of the most promising countries in Africa on the brink," said Michelle Gavin, an analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"Kenya is not peripheral to the struggle against terrorism," she said. "Kenya has been a reliable partner."

Ms. Gavin fears a destabilized Kenya would be "extending the failed state space already occupied by Somalia that has appeal for terrorists."

The Bush administration considers the Horn of Africa one of the critical battlegrounds in preventing al Qaeda from extending its hubs of operation beyond the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

One of the Pentagon's first post-September 11 moves was to set up the 1,800-troop Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa in the small nation of Djibouti on Somalia's northern border. It trains area military and police forces in counterterrorism techniques. In one instance last January, it launched an AC-130 gunship attack on suspected al Qaeda terrorists in Somalia.

Immediately after September 11, the State Department dispatched its

then-top African diplomat, Walter Kansteiner, to Kenya and other East African nations. His mission: poll leaders on the al Qaeda threat and on their needs to fight terrorism.

Nairobi had already suffered one of al Qaeda's most daring and deadly attacks. The August 1998 car bombing of the U.S. Embassy there killed 212 persons and injured more than 4,000, most of them Africans. The attack underlined al Qaeda's desire to topple governments in North and East Africa, and establish strict Islamist rule.

Three years later, Mr. Kansteiner heard Kenyan officials say their chief fear was not necessarily disease or poverty, but a growing Islamist movement that could wreck the country. U.S. economic and military aid soon started flowing in.

"Kenya had already been looked on as one of the key, large, stable nations of Africa," said Mr. Kansteiner, now an adviser at the Scowcroft Group in Washington. "From independence [in 1963], through the Cold War, through post-9/11, Kenya has always been a very good ally. Kenya has been a regional anchor of stability. It has provided infrastructure, everything from communications, to transportation, to medical facilities."

President Bush in 2003 announced a \$100 million aid program — the East African Counterterrorism Initiative — for Kenya, as well as Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Tanzania. U.S. military and civilian officials began arriving in Kenya to teach basic operations to counter al Qaeda, such as how to watch over the country's long Indian Ocean coastline and how to find and disarm truck bombs. Kenya had no official "watch list" to weed out terrorism suspects traveling through the country's seaports and airports. Now it does.

In return, Kenya has helped Washington by sharing

intelligence and military bases, and by providing troops for various peacekeeping missions.

"In that region, they are a very competent army," Lt. Gen. DeLong said.

Kenya has stood as a relatively vibrant democracy and free-market economy on a continent plagued by despots, disease and violence. Mr. Kansteiner said Nairobi does more than help the U.S. militarily. It promotes democracy in surrounding nations and sponsors talks aimed at reconciliation among various warring factions in Somalia.

"They have been very attuned to private-sector growth," he said. "They have done a good job of trying to reach out to the region and not only make Kenya economically strong, but also to integrate the region's economies and private sectors."

Mr. Kansteiner, while troubled by events in Kenya, does not expect it to deteriorate into a failed state.

"I think what we are looking at is some turbulent days until a new structure is put in place," he said. "That new structure could be new elections. It could be a proper recount."

Washington Post
January 7, 2008
Pg. 12

21. As Bush Heads To Mideast, Renewed Questions On Iran

Israeli, Arab Leaders Doubt U.S. Resolve

By Michael Abramowitz and Ellen Knickmeyer, Washington Post Staff Writers

President Bush intends to use his first extended tour of the Middle East to rally support for international pressure against Iran, even as a recent U.S. intelligence report playing down Tehran's nuclear ambitions has left Israeli and Arab leaders rethinking their own approach toward Iran and questioning Washington's

resolve, according to senior U.S. officials, diplomats and regional experts.

Bush is to leave Tuesday for Israel, where he hopes to jump-start the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations he launched in Annapolis late last year. But in Jerusalem and some of the Arab countries Bush plans to visit, Iran's growing regional influence looms larger than the peace process or the Iraq war. Leaders in the region are gauging whether the lame-duck administration has the interest and ability to cope with Iran, or whether they should pursue their own military and diplomatic solutions.

"Part of the reason I'm going to the Middle East is to make it abundantly clear to nations in that part of the world that we view Iran as a threat, and that the [National Intelligence Estimate] in no way lessens that threat, but in fact clarifies the threat," Bush said in an interview with the Israeli newspaper Yediot Ahronot released Friday.

Administration officials have been alarmed by what they see as Iran's efforts to develop a nuclear weapon and intimidate its Sunni neighbors. But their efforts to build support for sanctions and other pressure on Tehran took a serious hit last month when a National Intelligence Estimate -- representing the shared view of U.S. intelligence agencies -- concluded that Iran halted its nuclear arms program in 2003.

Administration officials insist that the estimate showed Iran remains capable of, and interested in, developing a nuclear weapon. But Israel, which is believed to have nuclear weapons, saw the report as a sign that Washington is flagging in its zeal to confront Iran, which they regard as a threat to its existence. And in Arab Sunni countries such as Saudi Arabia, which feel threatened by the rising Shiite power that Iran represents, the NIE renewed doubts over whether the United

States might be seeking an accommodation with Tehran.

In an interview yesterday, Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa cited recent overtures between Iran and Arab countries and said Arab nations are exercising a prerogative to set their own course on Iran. "As long as they have no nuclear program ... why should we isolate Iran? Why punish Iran, now?" he asked.

One senior administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak publicly about the trip said many Middle Eastern governments were "confused" by the NIE. "No Arab regime understands why the United States would publish an intelligence estimate." The official said Iran will be an important focus of Bush's conversations with regional leaders, with the president seeking to reassure them of U.S. staying power in the Middle East.

"Iran, for Israel, is topic Number One," said Meir Javedanfar, an Iranian expatriate living in Israel who runs an economic and political analysis company, and has written a book about Iran's nuclear program. "Most of the Israeli politicians and population see Iran as a greater threat than Hamas," he said, comparing Iran to the Islamic movement that controls Gaza. "And the Israeli government will be eager for Bush to show them that he is still committed to stopping Iran."

In Tehran yesterday, an Iranian government spokesman said Bush had failed to create an anti-Iran coalition. "The aim of these repeated trips is to compensate for the failed policies of America in the region," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini, according to wire reports.

Bush is planning stops in Israel, the Palestinian territories, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and several smaller Gulf

countries during his eight-day trip. While in Kuwait, Bush will meet for the first time in four months with Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, to discuss Iraq.

In Israel, which he is visiting for the first time as president, Bush is likely to be greeted as one of the country's greatest friends. But in the Arab world, his presidency has been perceived as damaging to the region and to U.S. prestige.

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein's Sunni Arab regime in Iraq, which long served as a counterweight to Shiite Muslim Iran, has allowed Iran's influence to grow. At the same time, Arab leaders blame the breakdown, until recently, of Israeli-Palestinian talks on Bush's refusal to assume the U.S. president's traditional hands-on role in Middle East peace negotiations.

Arab dissidents were elated and then devastated when Bush called for democracy in the region in 2005, only to appear to back away after election victories in Iraq and the Palestinian territories by religious blocs -- the only groups that had built popular support under autocratic governments. Bush plans to offer something of a report card on his Middle East "freedom agenda" when he stops in the United Arab Emirates' capital, Abu Dhabi, next week.

In Arab streets, many blame Washington for the plight of Iraqis and Palestinians. Bush's presidency has been "disastrous," said Hisham Kassem, an Egyptian journalist who received a National Endowment for Democracy award from him last fall. "America's neither feared nor loved. It's neither feared by the regimes anymore, and it's hated by the people of the Middle East... That's the Bush legacy."

Complicating matters has been the effort by Iranian President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad, buoyed by soaring oil revenues, to expand Tehran's clout. The United States also sees Iranian meddling in Lebanon and Palestinian affairs through ties to Hezbollah and Hamas. But many Arabs blame U.S. actions for Iran's influence. In Iraq, where the 2003 U.S. invasion led to a Shiite government, "Iran got the best help" possible from Washington, Moussa said.

In December, Ahmadinejad scored a diplomatic trifecta: He spoke before the Gulf Cooperation Council, an Arab bloc formed to counter Iran, in the first such appearance by an Iranian president. He also visited Mecca for the haj religious pilgrimage at the invitation of Saudi King Abdullah, another first for an Iranian president.

Ahmadinejad closed the year by sending envoy Ali Larijani to Egypt, a country that has frozen ties with Iran for 28 years, offering to help Cairo develop nuclear energy. Talk of resuming diplomatic relations followed.

The challenge for Bush, according to analysts in Washington and the Middle East, is to convince Arab countries that their best hope for minimizing the Iranian threat is to stick with the United States -- while dissuading Israel from a unilateral, preemptive strike on Tehran's nuclear facilities.

"The real question is what can the president say or do to reassure them about Iranian power?" said Richard N. Haass, a former senior State Department official and president of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Bush's key stop may be in Riyadh, where Bush will hold a rare face-to-face meeting with King Abdullah, who has been alternately critical and supportive of U.S. efforts on Iraq, Israeli-Palestinian talks and the rest of the Middle East. The Saudi royal family, which rules in alliance with hard-line Sunni clerics, is concerned

about the spread of Iranian influence and is unhappy with the new Shiite dominance of Iraq.

But Abdullah prefers to co-opt enemies, not confront them, and appears to be seeking a deal with Ahmadinejad, said Bruce Riedel, who worked on Middle East affairs in the Clinton and Bush administrations. "I think there is a great effort on both Riyadh and Washington's part to obscure that because they do not want the public spat," he said.

The senior U.S. official was skeptical, saying that the Saudis do not invite the Iranian president to their meetings -- "he invites himself."

"They are going to have a relationship with Iran," this official said. "Saudi diplomacy is traditionally quite cautious and conservative, but don't mistake caution and conservatism for sympathy."

But some Arabs suspect the Bush administration may decide it has to work with Iran to preserve security gains in Iraq. Khalid al-Dakheel, a political scientist at King Saud University in Riyadh, said "some people here think, or have the jitters, that this administration or the next administration ... might find themselves in a position to reconcile themselves with the Iranians."

Knickmeyer reported from Cairo. Correspondent Jonathan Finer in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Washington Post
January 7, 2008
Pg. 14

22. Egypt To Bolster Gaza Border

U.S. Aid Will Help in Detecting Tunnels, Congressman Says
By Ellen Knickmeyer,
Washington Post Foreign Service

CAIRO, Jan. 6 -- Egypt has agreed to spend \$23 million in U.S. military aid on robots and other advanced technology to detect smuggling

tunnels along its border with the Gaza Strip, a U.S. congressman said Sunday.

Egypt also has accepted a U.S. offer to send experts from the Army Corps of Engineers to train Egyptian border guards in the technology, said Rep. Steve Israel (D-N.Y.).

The United States offered the technology and training in an effort to defuse tensions between Egypt and Israel over Egypt's control of its Sinai border with Gaza. Congress voted last month to withhold \$100 million in U.S. military aid to Egypt until the country intensifies policing of the border.

Israeli officials accuse Egypt of allowing smugglers to ferry arms and other goods to the Palestinian movement Hamas, which has controlled the Gaza Strip since June.

Egyptians deny that large amounts of weapons are being moved through the tunnels and place much of the blame for the smuggling on Israeli-Egyptian accords limiting the number of security personnel Egypt can keep on the border. Egypt has urged Israel to reopen negotiations on that limit.

The New York congressman, in Egypt as part of a Middle East tour, said the equipment includes unmanned ground vehicles and acoustic sensors.

Another official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, described the unmanned vehicles as robots.

Specialists from the Army Corps of Engineers are expected to spend about two months training Egyptian border workers, the congressman said.

"With the Army Corps equipment, with the sustained U.S. technical advice, this should make a big difference in closing these tunnels, and take the tunnels off the table in future appropriations debates," Israel said by telephone.

An Egyptian official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said late Sunday

that "there is an endeavor of the sort. It hasn't really materialized yet."

The official acknowledged that the congressman had urged Egypt to allow the Army Corps to help it monitor the border long-term. "That's an issue of a tentative nature," the official said.

Accusations over smuggling have raised tensions between Israel and Egypt as President Bush is due to arrive in the region this week on the first extended Middle East tour of his presidency.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni outraged Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak last month when she declared that Egypt was doing a "terrible" job of controlling its border with Gaza. Mubarak said afterward that Livni "has crossed a line with me."

Israel, the New York congressman, spoke Sunday after a three-hour meeting with Mubarak.

"There's a lot of tension here," he said. "I'm hopeful that the volume will be turned down."

New York Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. 6

23. Poland Signals Doubts About Planned U.S. Missile-Defense Bases On Its Territory

By Judy Dempsey

BERLIN — Signaling a tougher position in negotiations with the United States on a European antiballistic-missile shield system, Poland's foreign minister says his country's new government is not prepared to accept American plans to deploy missile-defense bases in Poland until all costs and risks are considered.

"This is an American, not a Polish project," Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski said in an interview published in the weekend edition of the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

The previous Polish

government had consented in principle to accept missile-interceptor bases as part of a larger system that would include a radar station in the Czech Republic, but no formal agreement has been signed. Now Mr. Sikorski is saying that the terms under which the shield would be deployed were unclear and that the new government wants the risks to be explained, the financial costs to be set out and clarification on how Poland's interests would be defended if the bases were put on its territory.

"We feel no threat from Iran," he said, challenging Bush administration assertions that some of the biggest threats facing the security of Europe and the United States are from "rogue states" in the Middle East.

Still, Mr. Sikorski said, "if an important ally such as the United States has a request of such an important nature, we take it very seriously."

He added: "It is not only the benefits but the risks of the system that have to be discussed fully. It cannot be that we alone carry the costs."

There was no official response from the United States. Bogdan Klich, Poland's new defense minister, is expected to make his first official visit to Washington this month to explain his government's position.

NATO said Sunday that the missile defense issue was essentially a discussion for Poland, the United States and Russia. "NATO is happy to be a forum for discussion, and it is a useful one," said James Appathurai, a spokesman for the alliance. "But it does not substitute for the bilateral track."

Mr. Sikorski also said he was worried that the United States might abandon the project after the American presidential election in November. In that case, Poland would nevertheless have to bear political costs, like the deterioration of relations with

Russia, if it signed on to the shield prematurely.

The deployment of the missile defense system has become such a contentious issue between the United States and Russia — and also between Poland and Russia — that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has warned of a new arms race if Washington proceeds with the plan in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Having accused Washington of threatening Russia's national security interests, Mr. Putin last month suspended his nation's participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

Under that treaty, one of the last major arms pacts between the former cold war foes, countries stretching from Canada across Europe to the eastern parts of the former Soviet Union cut their conventional forces and agreed to on-site inspections and an elaborate system of verification and notifications. It took effect in 1992.

The Kremlin did not say how long it would suspend its participation. But Russian diplomats said it depended on not only what kind of concessions the United States was prepared to make concerning changes to the treaty, but also on whether Poland and the Czech Republic would deploy components of the American antimissile system.

The approach on missile defense taken by Poland's new center-right coalition government, under Prime Minister Donald Tusk, reflects a different negotiating strategy from that of the previous nationalist-conservative government led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski.

Mr. Kaczynski, who was much more pro-American, agreed in principle to deploy several interceptors on Polish territory without going into detail over the costs, the maintenance and the risks to

Poland's security, according to Polish officials.

The former prime minister did little to allay Russia's fears about deploying the missile shield in Poland, or to drum up support in other European Union member states. He left it up to the United States to explain the issue to the Kremlin and to European governments.

In contrast, Mr. Tusk and Mr. Sikorski, while certainly aware of Mr. Putin's growing assertiveness in international affairs, have repeatedly said they want to improve relations with Russia.

New York Times
January 7, 2008
Pg. 11

24. Qaeda Urges Meeting Bush With Bombs

CAIRO (AP) — An American member of Al Qaeda urged fighters to meet President Bush "with bombs" when he visits the Middle East this week, according to a new videotape posted on the Internet on Sunday.

Adam Gadahn, who has appeared in several Qaeda videotapes, also tore up his United States passport as a symbolic protest in the nearly hourlong tape.

Mr. Bush is scheduled to arrive in Israel on Wednesday as part of a weeklong trip through the region to push for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

"Now we direct an urgent call to our militant brothers," Mr. Gadahn, 29, said in Arabic, urging them "to be ready to receive the Crusader slayer Bush in his visit to Muslim Palestine and the Arab peninsula in the beginning of January and to receive him not with flowers or clapping but with bombs and booby-trapped vehicles."

In the rest of the tape, Mr. Gadahn, who was born in California, spoke mostly in English, apparently to address

Americans. He said Al Qaeda felt the need to release the statement after Washington's "defeat" in Iraq and Afghanistan and failed attempts by the Bush administration to bring peace to the Middle East.

"The first questions Americans might ask is, has America really been defeated? The answer is yes and on all fronts," he said.

The authenticity of the video, which appeared on a Web site used by Islamic militants and carrying the logo of Al Qaeda's media wing, could not immediately be independently verified.

Mr. Gadahn, also known as Azzam al-Amriki, was charged with treason in the United States in 2006 and is wanted by the F.B.I., which is offering a \$1 million reward for information leading to his arrest or conviction.

Ben Venzke, the head of IntelCenter, a Virginia-based group that monitors and analyzes militant messages, said much of the video shares a tone similar to Mr. Gadahn's previous messages.

"It fits into Al Qaeda's notion of providing warning and opportunity for people to correct their ways to avoid an attack," he said.

Newsweek
January 14, 2008

25. Al Qaeda's Newest Triggerman

Baitullah Mehsud is being blamed for most of the suicide bombings in Pakistan, including Benazir Bhutto's assassination. The rise of a militant leader.

By Sami Yousafzai and Ron Moreau

How do you track down a foe without a face? That is the challenge posed by Baitullah Mehsud, the man who could well be the newest Enemy No. 1 in the War on Terror. Since he first emerged as a young jihadist leader three years ago, the black-bearded and slow-talking tribal leader has

transformed his Mehsud clan's mountainous badlands in the northwest corner of Pakistan into a safe haven for Al Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban and outlawed Pakistani jihadists. Though uneducated, and only in his mid-30s, Baitullah snookered Pakistani leader Pervez Musharraf into a fake peace deal two years ago—and even got him to hand over a few hundred thousand dollars. Just as important, Baitullah has learned the hard lessons of previous jihadists who grew too enamored of the spotlight for their own good. According to Afghan Taliban who know him, he travels in a convoy of pickups protected by two dozen heavily armed guards, he rarely sleeps in the same bed twice in a row, and his face has never been photographed. They say his role model is Mullah Mohammed Omar, the equally mysterious Taliban leader who disappeared from view in 2001.

U.S. officials have distanced themselves somewhat from the Pakistani government's swift—perhaps too swift—conclusion that Baitullah was behind the Dec. 27 assassination of Benazir Bhutto. The slain former prime minister's Pakistan Peoples Party also disputed that claim, pointing the finger instead at figures within the government. Even Musharraf toned down previous statements from his own officials definitively assigning blame to Baitullah, and late last week he invited Scotland Yard to help with the investigation.

Still, most U.S. experts agree that Baitullah is the most likely culprit. Musharraf told a press conference last Friday that the tribal leader was behind most if not all of the 19 suicide bombings in Pakistan, including the two aimed at Bhutto, in the past three months. "He is the only one who had the capacity," says one Afghan Taliban with close connections to Mehsud, Al Qaeda and Pakistani militants. (The source, who has proved

reliable in the past, would speak only if his identity were protected.) Last week the Pakistani government produced an intercept in which it claims Baitullah was heard telling a militant cleric after Bhutto's murder: "Fantastic job. Very brave boys, the ones who killed her." Pakistani and U.S. authorities now fear that Baitullah, encouraged by the chaos that followed Bhutto's assassination, will try to wreak more havoc before the rescheduled Feb. 18 national elections.

The Afghan Taliban source claims that Baitullah and his Qaeda allies had laid out remarkably intricate plans for killing Bhutto, who was a champion of secular democracy and a declared enemy of the jihadists. He says Baitullah and Al Qaeda's No. 2, Ayman Al-Zawahiri—along with Zawahiri's deputy, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, Al Qaeda's new commander of military operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan—had dispatched suicide-bomber squads to five cities: Karachi, Peshawar, Lahore, Islamabad and Rawalpindi, where she was killed. Their orders were to follow Bhutto with the aim of assassinating her if an opportunity presented itself. (Two U.S. counterterrorism officials, who asked for anonymity when discussing the investigation, say there are growing indications of Baitullah's involvement in the assassination.) Baitullah and his allies have even grander plans, the Afghan source says. Her assassination is only part of Zawahiri's long-nurtured plan to destabilize Pakistan and Musharraf's regime, wage war in Afghanistan, and then destroy democracy in other Islamic countries such as Turkey and Indonesia.

Baitullah's alleged emergence as the triggerman in this grand scheme illustrates the mutability of the jihadist enemy since 9/11. As recently as June 2004, Iraq was said to be Al Qaeda's main

battleground, and Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi was the terror chieftain whom U.S. authorities worried about most. Baitullah was then a largely unknown subcommander in South Waziristan. But that same month, a U.S. Hellfire missile fired from a Predator drone killed Nek Mohammad, the young, dashing and publicity-hungry tribal leader in Waziristan. Al Qaeda and tribal militants promoted the young Baitullah to a command position. His equally young Mehsud clansman, Abdullah Mehsud—a one-legged jihadist who had recently been released from two years of detention in Guantanamo—also seemed to be a rising star. But after the botched kidnapping of two Chinese engineers working on a dam in the tribal area, a local council backed by Al Qaeda removed Abdullah and replaced him with the little-known Baitullah, who was seen as being more levelheaded. (Abdullah was later killed in a shoot-out.)

Since then, Zarqawi has been killed by U.S. forces, Iraq has receded as a haven for Al Qaeda, and Baitullah has come into his own as a terrorist leader in newly unstable Pakistan. Last month a council of militant leaders from the tribal agencies and neighboring areas named Baitullah the head of the newly formed Taliban Movement in Pakistan, a loose alliance of jihadist organizations in the tribal agencies. Taliban sources who would speak only on condition of anonymity describe Baitullah as a key middleman in the jihadist network: his tribesmen provide security for Al Qaeda's rough-hewn training compounds in the tribal area as well as foot soldiers for Qaeda-designed attacks. With a long tradition as smugglers, the tribals (most of whom, like Baitullah, take Mehsud as their surname) run an extensive nationwide trucking and transport network that reaches from the borderlands into teeming cities

like Karachi, allowing Baitullah to easily move men and weapons throughout Pakistan.

Baitullah has clearly outsmarted the unpopular Musharraf, whom President George W. Bush praised again last week as an "ally" who "understands clearly the risks of dealing with extremists and terrorists." In February 2005, with his military getting bloodied in the tribal areas, the Pakistani president decided to strike a peace deal with Baitullah and other militant leaders and their frontmen. Under the terms of the deal the militants agreed not to provide assistance or shelter to foreign fighters, not to attack government forces, and not to support the Taliban or launch cross-border operations into Afghanistan. As part of the deal, Baitullah coaxed the government into giving him and the other leaders \$540,000 that they supposedly owed to Al Qaeda. The large cash infusion bolstered the jihadist forces, and under cover of the ceasefire Baitullah's territory became an even more secure safe haven. He and other militant leaders have assassinated some 200 tribal elders who dared to oppose them. The Pakistani government struck a similar peace agreement with militants in North Waziristan in September 2006, transforming much of that tribal area into a militant camp as well.

One of Baitullah's biggest successes came in August, when his men captured more than 250 Pakistani soldiers and paramilitary troops, who surrendered without firing a shot. Mehsud demanded the release of 30 jailed militants and the end of Pakistani military operations in the Mehsud tribal area as the price for the men's release. To show he meant business, he ordered the beheading of three of his hostages. Once again, Musharraf gave in. On the day after Musharraf declared a state of emergency—which he

claimed was aimed at giving him a stronger hand to fight militants like Baitullah—the Pakistani president released 25 jailed insurgents including several failed suicide bombers. Last week Mehsud's forces captured four more Pakistani paramilitary troops in several brazen operations that may have led to the death of 25 of his men.

In his few statements to the press, Baitullah has made his agenda frighteningly clear. He vowed, in a January 2007 interview, to continue waging a jihad against "the infidel forces of American and Britain," and to "continue our struggle until foreign troops are thrown out" of neighboring Afghanistan. He knows he's a marked man: "The Angel of Death is flying over our heads all the time," he told the now deceased Taliban leader Mullah Akhund Dadullah at a dinner, according to one senior Taliban source. But from his secure corner of Pakistan—a country run by a widely despised autocrat who, after Bhutto, has few real democratic successors—Baitullah may well wage that fight for a long time to come.

U.S. News & World Report
January 14, 2008

Washington Whispers
26. Helping Hand For Hurt Bomb Squads

By Paul Bedard

It has never been a great job, but in the Iraq war, where improvised explosive devices are a leading cause of injury and death, being a member of the military bomb squad is more dangerous than ever. Few know that better than Kenneth Falke, a former Navy Explosive Ordnance Device boss, and Sherri Beck, wife of an EOD veteran. They've helped to create a group to assist wounded EOD team members. The Virginia-based Wounded EOD Warrior Foundation raises money to provide \$2,500 to those injured and their families "no questions

asked," says Beck. Most use it to travel to the hospitals to visit their injured relatives, she says.

Washington Post
January 7, 2008

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At the White House
27. In A Shorter War, The Numbers Might Have Added Up

By Michael Abramowitz

About six months before the United States invaded Iraq, then-White House economic adviser Lawrence B. Lindsey famously estimated that the war would cost between \$100 billion and \$200 billion. The prediction ended up being way too low: As of Sept. 30, congressional analysts recently estimated, the war had cost \$449 billion, and the number is still rising.

The episode helped get Lindsey ousted from a White House intent on imposing message discipline and furious about an estimate that, even while low, was the first to hint at the larger budgetary consequences of the invasion.

In the years since, Lindsey has studiously avoided comment about the circumstances surrounding that estimate.

But in a book being published this week -- "What a President Should Know ... But Most Learn Too Late" -- Lindsey offers for the first time what he terms "the true story" behind his estimate, including what he sees as a mistaken White House strategy to play down the costs of war to maintain public support for an invasion.

Putting "out only a best-case scenario without preparing the public for some worse eventuality was the wrong strategy to follow," Lindsey writes. "It may have helped at the margin in the very short run by making the war sound attractive.

"But this came at the expense of undermining the president's political capital in

the long run."

As Lindsey tells it, the estimate grew out of a conversation in his office with Wall Street Journal reporter Bob Davis in September 2002 about the economic consequences of the "war on terror." During the conversation, Lindsey projected the "upper bound" of spending on a then-hypothetical Iraq war at 1 to 2 percent of gross domestic product, or between \$100 billion and \$200 billion.

In his book, Lindsey suggests that he came up with that range by looking at some historical comparisons and contemporary rules of thumb regarding force commitments. Based on those calculations, he says, the "most plausible number" for the cost of the war was going to be between 0.5 and 1 percent of GDP for each year of the conflict. A year at the high end of that estimate and up to two years of follow-up at a lower end produce Lindsey's estimate of between 1 and 2 percent of GDP. (Lindsey says the war is actually running at about 0.7 percent of GDP annually.)

Where he went wrong, of course, is his estimate of how long the war would last. "When I look back, did I do an honest job in coming up with this estimate? I think the answer is yes," Lindsey said in an interview last week. "You have to make assumptions at a certain point, and that assumption turned out to be wrong."

Lindsey writes that, even in hindsight, he does not believe that his basic message to Davis was inappropriate or contrary to administration thinking: Even if the United States went to war in Iraq, it would not derail the economy. But it was simply the fact of the interview that appears to have angered his (unnamed) White House colleagues.

At the time, Lindsey writes, "the entire country was talking about everything related to the Iraq War except

the White House. If there was a break in message discipline, it was not that the actual words of the message were wrong; rather, it was that there was a message at all. At that time, message discipline on Iraq was the functional equivalent of radio silence."

Lindsey's comments came in a book written with the help of former White House colleague Marc Sumerlin, a partner with him in a consulting group that offers advice on economic trends to big corporations. The book provides an "insider's view" on how to succeed in the White House, in the form of memos to the next president on how to organize his or her administration, consider big questions such as going to war and handle complex issues.

Among Lindsey's more provocative recommendations is that the next president take office planning to serve only one term, to ensure a focus "solely on the things that motivated you to run in the first place." Lindsey, who is advising GOP presidential hopeful Fred D. Thompson, came to this conclusion after appraising the problematic second terms of many recent presidents, including the one he served most recently.

Lindsey said in the interview that he believes the first term went reasonably well for President Bush, especially on domestic policy, because he had a clear agenda -- tax cuts, education reform, rebuilding the military, a prescription drug plan and Social Security -- and achieved much of it. "The first term pretty much ran according to book," he said. "The second term--they didn't do that. If you don't have a script, you don't have something to stick to."

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January 6, 2008
**28. 2008 Full Of
Challenges For Asia
Leaders**

By Richard Halloran

The year 2008 will confront many leaders in Asia, especially those in Beijing and Islamabad, Pakistan, with exceptionally difficult tests. For the U.S., stuck with a lame-duck president and a tedious election campaign, the tests will not come until a new president enters the White House in January 2009.

The authoritarian leaders in Beijing, who are promoting the Olympic Games they will host in August as an emblem of China's arrival as a great power, will be tested by their handling of the hordes of athletes, spectators and journalists who will descend on the capital.

Chinese political activists are almost certain to draw attention to China's violations of human rights while religious activists, such as Falun Gong, will most likely find ways to protest the regime's repression of freedom of worship.

It may be 1989 all over again. Advocates of democracy camped in Tiananmen Square in central Beijing attracted foreign press and TV coverage from news teams that had journeyed to China to report on the visit of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. When demonstrations erupted and were put down brutally, the news flashed around the world.

Moreover, China's leaders may find it hard to conceal their nation's economic shortcomings that were recently outlined in a World Bank report, or its corruption, civil unrest, censorship, pollution and other environmental problems.

Across the continent, President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, or his successor if he does not survive in office, will be tasked to hold together a country threatening to split apart after the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. At the very least, the Pakistani leader will need to establish some semblance of order in that stricken nation.

The test that much of the

rest of the world is watching is whether Pakistan's stash of nuclear weapons, reported to number 60, can be kept away from terrorists such as those of al-Qaida, the Taliban, or others who may be operating in Pakistan. Pakistani military officers say they have control of the weapons — but the allegiance of some officers may be in doubt.

Back in East Asia, a new president in Taiwan is scheduled to be elected in March and to take office in May. A critical task will be to decide whether to rebuild relations with the U.S., the ultimate guarantor of Taiwan's de facto separation from China and, if so, to figure out how to go about it.

The incumbent, President Chen Shui-bian, has shown calculated disregard for Washington's efforts to maintain a balance between China and Taiwan. Moreover, both his political party and the opposition party have, in the eyes of many U.S. officials, been lax in preparing to defend Taiwan from a China that has repeatedly threatened to use military force to conquer the island.

In Seoul, South Korea, similar tasks will confront President-elect Lee Myung-bak when he takes office in February. The current president, Roh Moo-hyun, is regarded by U.S. officials as having been anti-American throughout his term. He has disparaged South Korea's alliance with the U.S. and adopted a policy toward North Korea that borders on appeasement.

North of the demilitarized zone that divides the Korean Peninsula, the leader of the regime in Pyongyang, Kim Jong Il, will continue to be confronted with at least two difficult decisions. One is whether to give up his nuclear weapons, which he has given little sign he is ready to do.

The other is to survive in power and to name a successor. Whiffs of civil unrest due to

near starvation and hints of dissent, including from the army that assures Kim's power, occasionally waft out of that dark and isolated land but they are so fleeting that no one gives them much credence. His father, Kim Il Sung, assured Kim Jong Il's rise to power by appointing him successor long before he passed away.

In Southeast Asia, Islamic terrorists in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia promise to keep leaders awake at night. If the past is any indication, those who hold office in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, won't be of much help in defeating the terrorists.

Americans, preoccupied with their own politics, may have little to say about how the pressing issues of Asia are met during this year. Indeed, the new U.S. president will most likely find himself or herself having to plunge into a thicket of changes in Asia over which the U.S. has had little or no influence.

Richard Halloran is a Honolulu-based journalist and former New York Times correspondent in Asia.

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29. Biased Against Homosexuals

I am a combat veteran of the war in Iraq. I served my country honorably and chose to stay in Iraq to have minor surgery rather than being evacuated. My team was frequently deployed in forward positions, and I was in combat. I am also a woman. I was sexually harassed at times — as I have been in the civilian world. However, during actual combat, my gender was meaningless compared to my ability to do my job and accomplish the mission.

There were homosexuals in my unit. While we were deployed, their sexual preference was meaningless

compared to their tactical and technical proficiency.

I found the two-part piece by Elaine Donnelly ("Gays and the military," Op-Ed. Wednesday and Thursday) to be offensive, biased and full of unfounded allegations about women and homosexuals in the military.

The operations tempo of the military today makes every service member who is well-qualified and hardworking a valuable, necessary part of the team. Troops on the ground are aware of that. It is unfortunate that Ms. Donnelly places her political bias above this reality.

**Kayla Williams,
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Editor's Note: The op-eds by Elaine Donnelly appeared in the *Current News Early Bird*, January 2 and 3, 2008.