

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD



January 10, 2008

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Story numbers indicate order of appearance only.

IRAQ

1. **Blast Kills 6 As Troops Hunt Iraqi Insurgents**
(*Washington Post*)....Amit R. Paley and Joshua Partlow
The explosion of a booby-trapped house killed six American soldiers on Wednesday during an offensive against Sunni insurgents in Diyala province, making it the deadliest day for U.S. troops in Iraq since November.
2. **Booby Trap Kills 6 U.S. Soldiers In Iraq**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Alexandra Zavis and Julian E. Barnes
Senior Sunni Arab insurgents may have fled the Diyala River valley this week just as U.S. troops were preparing to attack, but they left behind a deadly calling card.
3. **For U.S., The Goal Is Now 'Iraqi Solutions'**
(*Washington Post*)....Thomas E. Ricks and Karen DeYoung
In the year since President Bush announced he was changing course in Iraq with a troop "surge" and a new strategy, U.S. military and diplomatic officials have begun their own quiet policy shift. After countless unsuccessful efforts to push Iraqis toward various political, economic and security goals, they have decided to let the Iraqis figure some things out themselves.
4. **'05 Use Of Gas By Blackwater Leaves Questions**
(*New York Times*)....James Risen
The helicopter was hovering over a Baghdad checkpoint into the Green Zone, one typically crowded with cars, Iraqi civilians and United States military personnel.
5. **New Estimate Of Violent Deaths Among Iraqis Is Lower**
(*Washington Post*)....David Brown and Joshua Partlow
A new survey estimates that 151,000 Iraqis died from violence in the three years following the U.S.-led invasion of the country. Roughly 9 out of 10 of those deaths were a consequence of U.S. military operations, insurgent attacks and sectarian warfare.
6. **W.H.O. Says Iraq Civilian Death Toll Higher Than Cited**
(*New York Times*)....Lawrence K. Altman and Richard A. Opiel Jr.
The World Health Organization on Wednesday waded into the controversial subject of Iraqi civilian deaths, publishing a study that estimated that the number of deaths from the start of the war through June 2006 was at least twice as high as the oft-cited Iraq Body Count.
7. **Six Soldiers Killed In Booby-Trapped House In Iraq's Diyala Province**
(*CNN*)....Jamie McIntyre
Nine U.S. troops have been killed in Iraq in the last 48 hours.

AFGHANISTAN

8. **U.S. To Bolster Forces In Afghanistan**
(*Washington Post*)....Ann Scott Tyson
The U.S. military is planning to deploy about 3,000 Marines to Afghanistan this spring to counter an expected offensive by Taliban insurgents, a Pentagon spokesman said yesterday, citing NATO allies' failure to provide additional combat troops.
9. **Sending Marines To Afghanistan Proposed**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Julian E. Barnes and Peter Spiegel
...The proposal is supported by Adm. Michael G. Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and could be submitted to Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates as early as Friday.
10. **Afghanistan Welcomes Plan To Boost US Troop Numbers**
(*Wall Street Journal (wsj.com)*)....Agence France-Presse
Afghanistan on Thursday welcomed U.S. plans to send up to 3,000 additional marines to counter an expected Taliban spring offensive but insisted the long-term solution is to boost Afghan forces.
11. **Britain Sees Role For Afghan Tribes**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Yochi J. Dreazen
British military commanders in Afghanistan are pushing for the creation of armed tribal militias to aid in the fight against the Taliban, underscoring Western concern about deteriorating security in the country.
12. **TV News Coverage From Pentagon Correspondents**
(*CBS, CNN*)....David Martin; Barbara Starr
Two Wednesday evening reports on plans to send an additional 3,000 troops to Afghanistan.

IRAN

13. **Iran Threat Shadows Bush's Mideast Visit**
(*USA Today*)....Richard Wolf
President Bush had been on Israeli soil just minutes Wednesday when one of the top issues bothering the Middle East leaders he is scheduled to meet on his trip was broached: Iran.
14. **Iran Accuses U.S. Of Faking Persian Gulf Video**
(*New York Times*)....Nazila Fathi
Iran's Revolutionary Guard accused the United States on Wednesday of fabricating a video showing Iranian speedboats confronting United States Navy warships in the Persian Gulf over the weekend, according to a report carried by the semiofficial Fars news agency and state-run television.
15. **Top Iranian General Hit With Sanctions**
(*Washington Post*)....Robin Wright
The United States yesterday slapped sanctions on a top Iranian general and three exiled Iraqis based in Iran and Syria for fomenting violence in Iraq, as President Bush lashed out again at Tehran for last weekend's showdown between U.S. and Iranian naval vessels.
16. **President Bush On Strait Of Hormuz Incident**
(*Fox News Channel*)....Catherine Herridge
Speaking from the Middle East, President Bush warned of serious consequences if Iranian forces attack U.S. ships.

ASIA/PACIFIC

17. **Taliban Commander Emerges As Pakistan's 'Biggest Problem'**
(*Washington Post*)....Imtiaz Ali and Craig Whitlock
Even as his reputation has grown more menacing and his militia more powerful, the Taliban commander accused of ordering the death of Benazir Bhutto has shrouded himself in mystery.
18. **Pakistan Rejects UN Concerns, Contends Nuclear Arsenal Is Secure**
(*Boston Globe*)....Zeeshan Haider, Reuters
Pakistan rejected yesterday remarks by the UN nuclear watchdog chief that the nation's nuclear arsenal could fall into the hands of Islamist militants, and allayed the fears of a US senator visiting Islamabad.

19. **Beijing Would Use Force To Restore N. Korea Stability**
(Washington Times)....Steve Hirsch
 China would send troops into North Korea if it thought that was necessary to stem a refugee flood because of instability in its hard-line communist neighbor, a report by two Washington think tanks finds.

ARMY

20. **Army Officer Is Cleared In Abu Ghraib Scandal**
(Washington Post)....Josh White
 The only Army officer charged with a crime as a result of the abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq has been cleared of all criminal responsibility in the case after a general this week dismissed the one conviction against him and wiped away the sentence.
21. **Army Medic Unafraid To Say That He's Gay**
(St. Louis Post-Dispatch)....Suzanne Gamboa, Associated Press
 Even if no one is asking, Army Sgt. Darren Manzella has been telling anyone who'll listen that he's gay - without serious retribution so far from the military.
22. **Carson: Alleged Attacks Reported**
(Colorado Springs Gazette)....Dennis Huspeni
 Fort Carson officials confirmed they "immediately" notified military officials in Iraq about allegations of soldiers shooting at Iraqi civilians, but specifics about that investigation were scarce Wednesday.

NAVY

23. **Chief Naval Officer Visits Shipyards**
(Portland (ME) Press-Herald)....Matt Wickenheiser
 The Navy's top military officer visited Bath Iron Works and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery on Tuesday, the start of a coast-to-coast tour of shipyards that work on naval vessels.

AIR FORCE

24. **Most F-15 Jets Coming Back To Service**
(USA Today)....Unattributed
 The majority of Air Force F-15 fighter jets are returning to flight after being grounded for two months over possible structural flaws.
25. **F-15 Break-Up Animation Released**
(CNN)....Jamie McIntyre
 Exclusive Pentagon animation showing the break-up of an F-15 fighter jet that prompted the U.S. Air Force to ground its entire fleet.

MARINE CORPS

26. **4 Say Marines Took Fire In Attack By Afghans**
(New York Times)....Paul von Zielbauer
 Marines from an elite combat unit who American military commanders said killed 19 Afghan civilians last year after a suicide bomb attack withstood hostile gunfire immediately after the explosion, witnesses testified on Wednesday.
27. **Marine Is Arraigned In The Killings Of 24 Iraqis**
(Washington Post)....Unattributed
 A Marine Corps squad leader was arraigned on voluntary-manslaughter and other charges involving the 2005 killings of 24 Iraqi men, women and children. Staff Sgt. Frank Wuterich, 27, reserved the rights to enter a plea later and to have a judge or jury decide the case against him, which is the biggest U.S. criminal prosecution involving civilian deaths in the Iraq war. The judge, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Meeks, set a Feb. 25 trial date.
28. **For Marines, Iraq Becomes A Family Affair**
(Los Angeles Times)....Tony Perry
 The general who soon will lead 25,000 Marines in Iraq said Wednesday that "the experts" were wrong when they

predicted that repeated deployments would strain military families to the breaking point.

29. **Oo-Rah! A Squad Of Actors Takes Lanford Wilson To The Marines**

(New York Times)...Campbell Robertson

...He is hoping to prove to reluctant officials that serious theater — viewed by some in the military, Mr. Driver said, as “sissies running around stage in tights” — would not only work at Camp Pendleton but also be excellent for troops in war zones, where the entertainment options are much scarcer.

NATIONAL GUARD/RESERVE

30. **Louisiana: Extension Of Guard Watch In New Orleans**

(New York Times)...Associated Press

National Guard troops bolstering New Orleans’s hurricane-depleted police force will remain in the city through June, a spokeswoman for Gov.-elect Bobby Jindal said.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

31. **Court Battle Continues Over Defense Union's Bargaining Rights**

(Washington Post)...Stephen Barr

Just as it appeared the Ping-Pong battle between the Defense Department and its largest union was ending, the union has stepped up to the table for one last serve.

CONGRESS

32. **Democrats, Bush Clash Over Iraq Policy Great And Small**

(Aerospace Daily & Defense Report)...Michael Bruno

Lawmakers on Jan. 9, especially Democrats, chided President Bush's "surge" of U.S. land forces to Iraq last year for not achieving policy benchmarks and called for a quick resolution over a confused debate about the status of the fiscal 2008 defense authorization measure.

INTELLIGENCE

33. **Government Slow To Declassify Documents, Advisory Panel Says**

(Philadelphia Inquirer)...Pete Yost, Associated Press

The government is lagging far behind in declassifying its secrets, and the problem is getting worse as agencies create billions more electronic records containing classified information.

BUSINESS

34. **Northrop To Lead Bid For Army Plane**

(Baltimore Sun)...Unattributed

Northrop Grumman Corp., the third- largest U.S. defense contractor, said yesterday that it would lead a team to compete for the Army's Aerial Common Sensor, a new surveillance aircraft.

EUROPE

35. **British At Risk From Contaminated US Blood**

(London Daily Telegraph)...Laura Clout

British soldiers have been put at risk of contracting deadly diseases from contaminated American blood, it was claimed last night. The 18 servicemen received emergency blood transfusions at American field hospitals after being seriously wounded in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

OPINION

36. **The Surge Worked**

(Wall Street Journal)...John McCain and Joe Lieberman

...As Americans, we have repeatedly done what others said was impossible. Gen. Petraeus and his troops are doing that again in Iraq today.

37. **Modernizing The U.S Military**
(*Washington Times*)....Daniel L. Davis
Between now and the Feb. 5 "Super Duper Tuesday," America will get serious about scrutinizing its presidential candidates to ascertain where they stand on the most important issues. Regarding defense policy, virtually all the focus has thus far understandably been on how and when to end the war in Iraq and bring the troops home. This is an important issue, to be sure. But there is another defense topic that is ultimately of much greater importance that must now share some of the attention.
38. **Iran's Provocation**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Walter Russell Mead
...From the 18th century to the present day, threats to American ships and maritime commerce have been the way most U.S. wars start.

CORRECTIONS

39. **Correction**
(*New York Times*)....The New York Times
An article on Wednesday about President Bush's criticism of Iran for confronting American warships over the weekend misstated the conclusion of a recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iran, which Mr. Bush also discussed.

Washington Post
January 10, 2008
Pg. 1

1. Blast Kills 6 As Troops Hunt Iraqi Insurgents

U.S. Forces Encounter Booby-Trapped House

By Amit R. Paley and Joshua Partlow, Washington Post
Foreign Service

FORWARD

OPERATING BASE
NORMANDY, Iraq, Jan. 10 --
The explosion of a booby-trapped house killed six American soldiers on Wednesday during an offensive against Sunni insurgents in Diyala province, making it the deadliest day for U.S. troops in Iraq since November.

The blast, which also killed an Iraqi interpreter and injured four U.S. soldiers, took place on the second day of an unusually large campaign in Diyala against the insurgent group al-Qaeda in Iraq. Three U.S. troops were shot to death Tuesday in the neighboring northern province of Salahuddin.

The U.S. military is struggling to exert control over northern Iraq, where Sunni insurgents have fled during the past year after being driven out of Baghdad and Anbar province to the west. In addition to this offensive, commanders here are hoping to recruit local Sunnis into U.S.-backed volunteer forces that have successfully countered al-Qaeda in Iraq in other parts of the country.

U.S. commanders expected the fight in Diyala, part of a nationwide campaign against al-Qaeda in Iraq sanctuaries, to be particularly fierce. But most of the 200 fighters they expected to find here appear to have either escaped or successfully blended in with the local population.

Lt. Col. Rod Coffey, commander of the squadron leading the charge into the insurgent sanctuary, known as

the Bread Basket, estimated that the fighters would make their last stand in the town of Himbuz. U.S. soldiers said that when they entered the town Wednesday afternoon, it appeared to have emptied of insurgents.

At a news conference in Baghdad, the top U.S. military commander in northern Iraq, Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, acknowledged that the insurgents had not put up "the major defense that we initially thought."

"We have some areas that we're still very interested in where we think the enemy has withdrawn to," he added, "and we're continuing to pursue."

The attack on U.S. troops took place west of Himbuz around noon. According to initial reports received by commanders on the ground, the house had been searched by U.S. forces about 10 days ago and cleared of weapons. Before the recent offensive, insurgents were seen returning to the house at night and doing construction work.

The house, which had a "for sale" sign on it, was apparently ringed with explosives, some of which were contained in drums, according to the initial reports. The blast was so forceful that it caused most of the structure to collapse. Some of the soldiers were buried in the rubble and had to be pulled out.

Insurgents in Diyala have previously booby-trapped houses to target U.S. soldiers.

Early Wednesday, before the blast, a radio briefing for battalion commanders warned that al-Qaeda in Iraq would employ "deep-buried" bombs in previously cleared areas.

"The closer we get to Himbuz, the more we may encounter deep-buried IEDs," Coffey said, using the abbreviation for improvised explosive devices, or roadside bombs.

Some soldiers listening to radio communications following the blast were angered that an hour passed

from the first accounts of casualties just after noon to word that some of the injured had been airlifted at 1:15 p.m.

"This is ridiculous, I just don't understand why it took so long to get them out," said Staff Sgt. David Rozmarin, 26, of Omaha, who was sitting inside a Stryker combat vehicle as it rolled through villages where soldiers searched for weapons and insurgents.

Maj. Shawn Garcia, a U.S. military spokesman, could not be reached early Thursday for comment on the evacuation. Other officials asked that the unit of the dead soldiers not be identified because their families had not yet been notified.

The entry into Himbuz itself took place about 3 p.m., soldiers said. As troops moved into the town, a man on the second floor of a three-story building waved a red-and-green flag as if it were an insurgent banner, according to reports over the radio. Then he fled.

There was little fighting most of the day in the Bread Basket, though a number of bombs and weapons caches were found, ground commanders said.

A company outside Himbuz spent the day searching orange and date groves for weapons and insurgent fighters, for the most part with no success. U.S. troops surrounded the area to prevent fighters from escaping.

After finding a maze of paths in the date groves outside Himbuz that commanders had identified as possible exit ways, soldiers stood guard as others entered the town. Some soldiers doubted they would be able to spot an insurgent among people leaving Himbuz, but in any event no one fled.

"It's very possible for someone to be hiding in plain sight in front of us," Coffey said.

The operation in Diyala is part of a broader U.S. military offensive called Phantom Phoenix, which includes forces

across the country.

Across four provinces of northern Iraq, the effort involves 24,000 U.S.-led troops, 50,000 Iraqi army soldiers, 80,000 Iraqi policemen and some of the 15,000 U.S.-backed volunteers, Hertling said.

An Iraqi commander in Diyala province, Lt. Gen. Abdul Kareem al-Rubaie, estimated that 20 to 30 suspected insurgents were killed there during the initial operations, a figure that Hertling corroborated as roughly accurate.

Battalion commanders on the ground, however, said only a few insurgents were killed over the past two days.

Rubaie said he believed that al-Qaeda in Iraq fighters remain in Himbuz and the neighboring town of Dindel.

"This is considered a main stronghold for terrorism in Diyala," he said. "The decisive battle with terrorism will be at this place."

After the combat operations, the U.S. military plans to open outposts in the province to keep a full-time security presence, as well as bring in Iraqi army and police personnel and the U.S.-funded volunteer forces to try to secure the terrain. That would be followed by humanitarian and infrastructure projects, Hertling said.

The United States has established the mainly Sunni volunteer forces in Anbar, Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq. Coffey said commanders have already identified two tribal leaders willing to lead one of the militias in the Shirween area of northern Diyala.

U.S. officials said they would continue to pursue al-Qaeda in Iraq fighters who might still be in the area, having blended in with the local population or hidden in the lush vegetation and fields.

"We need to get after some of them palm groves," Col. Jon S. Lehr, the commander of U.S. forces in Diyala, told his battalion commanders on

Wednesday. "Continue to do what you're doing out there and good hunting."

Partlow reported from Baghdad.

Los Angeles Times

January 10, 2008

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2. Booby Trap Kills 6 U.S. Soldiers In Iraq

The house rigged with explosives is the work of insurgents in Diyala province who fled just before a military operation against them.

By Alexandra Zavis and Julian E. Barnes, Los Angeles Times Staff Writers

SINSIL THARIA, IRAQ —Senior Sunni Arab insurgents may have fled the Diyala River valley this week just as U.S. troops were preparing to attack, but they left behind a deadly calling card.

A booby-trapped home exploded Wednesday, killing six American soldiers and injuring four others. The U.S. military also reported that three service members were killed by small-arms fire the day before. The two-day toll makes the latest effort to flush out the militant group Al Qaeda in Iraq the deadliest military operation in months.

The casualties came as about 4,000 U.S. and Iraqi troops descended Tuesday on Diyala province as part of a campaign to put new pressure on insurgents nationwide. Military officials believe many settled in the area north of Baghdad after being forced out of the capital and Anbar province in the west.

At least 3,921 U.S. troops have been killed since the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, according to the independent website icasualties.org. The last time six American troops were killed in a single hostile incident was in late May, in a roadside bombing in the Diyala community of Abu Sayda.

The Diyala region accounts for more than 40% of attacks nationwide.

Intelligence reports estimated that 50 to 60 senior insurgent leaders had been holed up northwest of Muqadidiya, but by the time the offensive began, they had fled -- in keeping with a long-standing pattern.

As U.S. forces continue to press into areas where they have not regularly patrolled, they have been at greater risk of encountering homes rigged with large amounts of explosives, officials said.

The military offered no details about Wednesday's deadly attack, nor did it release the names of the dead soldiers, pending notification of their families.

"We are looking really closely at the tactic," said Edward Loomis, a spokesman for the Pentagon's Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization. "We will continue to do everything we can to lower the risk of these events occurring. We are going to look really hard at this one."

Rigged houses typically use explosives and triggering devices similar to those in roadside bombs or car bombs, which the military calls vehicle-borne IEDs.

U.S. forces in Iraq first encountered large numbers of booby-trapped houses during the battle of Fallouja in 2004. American forces had steered clear of the city in Anbar province for much of that year, then telegraphed their intention to clear the city of Sunni Arab insurgents weeks before the operation began, allowing them to prepare elaborate defenses.

A number of rigged homes were also found in Diyala province in May and June, Loomis said, as U.S. forces stepped up operations against Sunni insurgents. During the previous Diyala operations some military officers referred to such homes as house-borne IEDs.

In the past, when such homes were discovered before they detonated, Air Force fighter planes were used to destroy them.

On Sunday, soldiers south of Baqubah spotted suspected insurgents with rocket-propelled grenades and AK-47s unrolling wire around a building. U.S.-led forces launched a Hellfire missile at the building, then dropped two bombs on it.

Secondary blasts, and wire discovered at the site, confirmed that the building had been rigged as a house-borne IED, U.S. military officials said.

On Wednesday, U.S. and Iraqi forces combed isolated villages, dense orchards and palm groves.

Mortar rounds crashed through thick foliage ahead of the advance through the agriculturally rich area, known as the breadbasket of Iraq.

In Sinsil Tharia, curious villagers gathered to watch soldiers from the 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, roll in with their armored vehicles. Families greeted the troops with offers of tea and sodas as they went door-to-door searching for insurgents and weapons.

"There is no security," one man told the soldiers, as he cradled his daughter in his arms. "We are afraid to go out, and we expect to be killed at any moment."

Residents said they hadn't seen masked gunmen who had been a common sight in their village before the offensive began. But the mayor warned that some insurgents still lurked among them.

U.S. commanders said they believed senior insurgent leaders had fled the region before the offensive, but that as many as 200 lower-level fighters could be hiding among the population.

Soldiers trudging through villages laced with canals said they were encountering much less fighting than they had expected.

U.S. soldiers handed out pamphlets urging residents to form volunteer groups to help defend their areas from insurgent groups such as Al

Qaeda in Iraq, a mostly local organization that the military says is foreign-led.

The decision by more than 70,000 mostly Sunni tribesmen across Iraq to turn against the insurgents they once tolerated played a key part in a 60% drop in violence nationwide since U.S. forces completed a 28,500-troop buildup in June. But a recent spate of suicide bombings has made clear that insurgents remain capable of spectacular attacks, many of them targeted at the security volunteers.

Elsewhere in Iraq on Wednesday, car bombs exploded in front of two churches in the northern city of Kirkuk. The bombings came three days after four bombs targeted churches in Mosul. No one was killed in any of the blasts, though a few people suffered injuries.

Religious leaders denounced the bombings as an attempt to instigate anger between religious groups.

"We lived side by side with the Muslim brothers in Iraq and Kirkuk," said a priest at one of the two targeted churches in Kirkuk. "Those attacks will increase our determination. We will go on to carry the olive branch and carry the banner of peace and brotherhood."

Also on Wednesday, radical Shiite Muslim cleric Muqtada Sadr issued a statement condemning President Bush's visit to the Middle East and urging Arab leaders not to meet with him.

"You brought the wars and you can't bring peace... . Get out of our land and you will be safe from us," Sadr said. "Then I address my words to the Arab leaders and say: '... Don't be partners responsible for the blood of your own people. If you will accept his visit, then you are collaborating with him on the blood of your brothers in Palestine, Iraq and others.'"

But some Shiites living in Najaf, where Sadr enjoys strong support, said the cleric should not be weighing in on

such matters, particularly because Bush has not announced plans to visit Iraq.

"It's not our business," said Abu Zahaa, a government employee. "I don't think the words in this statement can come from someone sane. Bush's visit is the concern of the states and nations that he is visiting."

Zavis reported from Sinsil Tharia in Diyala and Barnes from Washington. Times staff writer Kimi Yoshino in Baghdad and special correspondents in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Najaf contributed to this report.

Washington Post
January 10, 2008
Pg. 1

3. For U.S., The Goal Is Now 'Iraqi Solutions'

Approach Acknowledges Benchmarks Aren't Met

By Thomas E. Ricks and Karen DeYoung, Washington Post Staff Writers

In the year since President Bush announced he was changing course in Iraq with a troop "surge" and a new strategy, U.S. military and diplomatic officials have begun their own quiet policy shift. After countless unsuccessful efforts to push Iraqis toward various political, economic and security goals, they have decided to let the Iraqis figure some things out themselves.

From Gen. David H. Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker to Army privates and aid workers, officials are expressing their willingness to stand back and help Iraqis develop their own answers. "We try to come up with Iraqi solutions for Iraqi problems," said Stephen Fakan, the leader of a provincial reconstruction team with U.S. troops in Fallujah.

In many cases -- particularly on the political front -- Iraqi solutions bear little resemblance to the ambitious goals for 2007 that Bush laid out in his speech to the nation last Jan. 10. "To give

every Iraqi citizen a stake in the country's economy, Iraq will pass legislation to share oil revenues among all Iraqis," he pledged. "Iraqis plan to hold provincial elections later this year ... the government will reform de-Baathification laws, and establish a fair process for considering amendments to Iraq's constitution."

Although some progress has been made and legislation in some cases has begun to slowly work its way through the parliament, none of these benchmarks has been achieved. Nor has the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki taken over security responsibility for all 18 provinces, as Bush forecast it would. Last month's transfer of Basra province by British forces brought to nine the number of provinces under Iraqi control.

In explaining the situation, U.S. officials have made a virtue of necessity and have praised Iraqi ingenuity for finding different routes toward the same goals. Iraqis have figured out a way to distribute oil revenue without laws to regulate it, Crocker has often noted, and former Baathists are getting jobs. Local and provincial governing bodies -- some elected, some not -- are up and running.

The Iraqis "are at the point where they are able to fashion their own approaches and desired outcomes," Crocker said in an interview, "and we, I think, in part recognizing that and in part reflecting on where we have been over the last almost five years, are increasingly prepared to say it's got to be done in Iraqi terms."

The U.S. military has praised the Maliki government for acknowledging it is not ready to handle security in much of Iraq, and at the same time has dismissed ongoing violence in Basra and much of the rest of the south as an Iraqi problem. "There are innumerable challenges in the security situation in Basra," Petraeus, the top U.S. military

commander in Iraq, said late last year, "but there are Iraqi solutions emerging to some of these."

For some observers, the approach indicates a new realism in Washington, a recognition that long years of grandiose plans drawn from U.S. templates have not worked in Iraq. But others charge that the phrase "Iraqi solutions" implies a cynical U.S. willingness to turn a blind eye to sectarianism, political violence and a wealth of papered-over problems -- if that is the price of getting the United States out of Iraq.

"The new phrasing is both the dawning of reality, and the cynical use of language and common sense to camouflage past errors, hoping to avoid the audit of flawed logic that got us to this point," said a retired British general familiar with the U.S. experience in Iraq, and who asked not to be named because of the sensitivity of his current position.

U.S. officials at various levels are pushing the idea for different reasons, said Sarah Sewall, director of Harvard University's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy and a Clinton-era Pentagon official. While Petraeus has embraced the notion out of "realism," Sewall said, she thinks the Bush administration "has recently arrived at this formula out of desperation -- due to the failure of its past efforts."

The U.S. occupation authority initially envisioned a free-market paradise for Iraq, with flat taxes and a state-of-the-art stock exchange. Its successors lowered their expectations, seeking a westernized, relatively corruption-free system, gently trying to wrest the economy away from state ownership. But with little progress, U.S. officials in Baghdad now are simply looking for something that works, frequently spotlighting the Iraqi government's top economic milestone -- passing a national budget and spending some of

the appropriated funds.

On the military front, reliance on Iraqi solutions brought an unanticipated success. During the March 2003 invasion, the U.S. military neglected Anbar province, in western Iraq. Later, top commanders decided that a few raids would subdue the growing Sunni insurgency there. Only after Anbar became the center of operations for the Sunni insurgent group al-Qaeda in Iraq did U.S. combat forces move to claim the province, engaging in heavy fighting in the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi.

Last year, as Sunni tribes began to turn against al-Qaeda, U.S. officials accepted their offer to sort out the province themselves. Taking a leap of faith, U.S. commanders opened talks with tribal leaders and agreed to let them fight their own battles. But when the U.S. military suggested that the Shiite-led Iraqi government incorporate the Sunni fighters -- many of them veterans of anti-U.S. combat -- into their own security forces, the Iraqis balked.

The Anbar situation has become an example of the reality Washington confronts, as Iraqis have made clear they do not need U.S. permission to do what they want. "We completely, absolutely reject" a permanent Sunni-based security force, Iraqi Defense Minister Abdul-Qadir al-Obaidi told a news conference in late December. As soon as restive Sunni areas are calmed, he said, the local forces will be disbanded.

Talk of Iraqi solutions "is largely a red herring," said Wayne White, who led the State Department's Iraq intelligence team from 2003 to 2005. "This is a catchy phrase aimed at touting -- and exaggerating -- success in Sunni Arab areas," such as Anbar, "while diverting focus away from potential downsides related to same," including the creation of local forces allied with the United States but

opposed to the Iraqi government.

Much of the "Iraqi solutions" strategy is taking place on the neighborhood level, where the U.S. military has expressed little interest in reversing the sectarian cleansing that contributed to the recent decline in violence. Joint U.S. civilian-military teams seem steeped in new levels of patience and flexibility. They report ground-level accommodations on such issues as adjusting U.S.-sponsored "micro-loans" to reflect Islamic rejection of interest payments and direct dealings with representatives of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

"Politically, realistically, representatives of ... Sadr are important," said Paul Folmsbee, a Foreign Service officer who heads the U.S. civilian-military reconstruction team in Baghdad's Sadr City. "There's an office called the Office of the Moqtada al-Sadr, and they also provide many services to the population, and so we work with them." That includes working with Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, elements of which are fighting U.S. forces elsewhere, Folmsbee told reporters last month.

To Crocker, the meaning of "Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems" is "blindingly obvious. Iraq has got a government. It's got a system. It's got provincial governments. It's got a military and a police. And it has leaders of all of these things who increasingly take themselves seriously as leaders."

Crocker, who co-authored a 2002 paper predicting a "perfect storm" of things likely to go wrong after an ill-conceived U.S. invasion, was one of a number of U.S. diplomats who urged early caution. Since his arrival in Baghdad in March, he has insisted that the U.S. role is to "steer, push, prod and pound the table" to help Iraqis move forward without trying to do everything for them.

A major challenge for the Iraqi government this year, he said, will be dealing with rampant corruption. "Will it be through a U.S.-style approach to rule of law, under which officials file financial disclosure payments and can't take more than a cup of non-Starbucks coffee?" Probably not, he said.

"We can make some suggestions. We have. We are," Crocker said. "What we need them to do now is say, 'Thanks very much, but we've got a way of our own down which we want to move with this.'"

The approach also seems designed to bypass thorny issues. Direct dealings with Sadr's forces in the Baghdad neighborhoods they control both reverses earlier policy and sidesteps initial U.S. hopes for elected local government. In southern Iraq, U.S. military and civilian officials have refused to become involved in the violence between warring Shiite groups, with Petraeus describing that conflict as something Iraqis must deal with on their own.

The new openness to "Iraqi solutions" also reflects the U.S. military's painfully learned lessons about how to operate in an alien land. Army Col. Robert Roth, who trained Iraqi Army commanders in 2005, said it means that the only way to win in a counterinsurgency campaign is "by, with and through the people within that country where the insurgency exists -- they must decide how they want to live and then take action to make it so." The most successful example of that process in Iraq, Roth added, was the turnaround in Anbar.

To the U.S. civilian officials with whom the military has frequently been at odds in Iraq, it is a welcome change. "I have a lot of admiration for my military colleagues," said a senior U.S. diplomat in Baghdad who requested anonymity in order to speak candidly. "A lot of

them are really getting this, understanding issues ... family, culture, values, religion. You don't identify an objective in those areas, like a hill, and say, 'Let's come up with a plan, and we'll take that piece of territory.'"

The traditional military belief, he said, was that "if you just bring enough resources to a problem and get the right approach, the outcome is guaranteed. But it's very, very frustrating for them, as it is for all Americans, for members of Congress, because we are expending so much on this exercise, and we want to know that we're going to achieve something good.

"But we are learning," the diplomat said. "We are a pragmatic people at the end of the day ... [and] you don't get anybody ever to do something they don't want to do."

Several officers pointed out that the emphasis on local answers simply follows the instructions of the Army's new manual on counterinsurgency. Conrad Crane, an Army historian who co-authored the manual, noted that it quotes Lawrence of Arabia's famous admonition, "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly."

Crane said he has seen among U.S. brigade and battalion commanders in Iraq "a growing realization on the ground that Iraqi solutions will best fit Iraqi problems. We have learned some of this the hard way."

New York Times

January 10, 2008

Pg. 1

4. '05 Use Of Gas By Blackwater Leaves Questions

By James Risen

WASHINGTON — The helicopter was hovering over a Baghdad checkpoint into the Green Zone, one typically crowded with cars, Iraqi civilians and United States

military personnel.

Suddenly, on that May day in 2005, the copter dropped CS gas, a riot-control substance the American military in Iraq can use only under the strictest conditions and with the approval of top military commanders. An armored vehicle on the ground also released the gas, temporarily blinding drivers, passers-by and at least 10 American soldiers operating the checkpoint.

"This was decidedly uncool and very, very dangerous," Capt. Kincy Clark of the Army, the senior officer at the scene, wrote later that day. "It's not a good thing to cause soldiers who are standing guard against car bombs, snipers and suicide bombers to cover their faces, choke, cough and otherwise degrade our awareness."

Both the helicopter and the vehicle involved in the incident at the Assassins' Gate checkpoint were not from the United States military, but were part of a convoy operated by Blackwater Worldwide, the private security contractor that is under scrutiny for its role in a series of violent episodes in Iraq, including a September shooting in downtown Baghdad that left 17 Iraqis dead.

None of the American soldiers exposed to the chemical, which is similar to tear gas, required medical attention, and it is not clear if any Iraqis did. Still, the previously undisclosed incident has raised significant new questions about the role of private security contractors in Iraq, and whether they operate under the same rules of engagement and international treaty obligations that the American military observes.

"You run into this issue time and again with Blackwater, where the rules that apply to the U.S. military don't seem to apply to Blackwater," said Scott L. Silliman, the executive director of the Center on Law, Ethics

and National Security at the Duke University School of Law.

Officers and noncommissioned officers from the Third Infantry Division who were involved in the episode said there were no signs of violence at the checkpoint. Instead, they said, the Blackwater convoy appeared to be stuck in traffic and may have been trying to use the riot-control agent as a way to clear a path.

Anne Tyrrell, a spokeswoman for Blackwater, said the CS gas had been released by mistake.

"Blackwater teams in the air and on the ground were preparing a secure route near a checkpoint to provide passage for a motorcade," Ms. Tyrrell said in an e-mail message. "It seems a CS gas canister was mistaken for a smoke canister and released near an intersection and checkpoint."

She said that the episode was reported to the United States Embassy in Baghdad, and that the embassy's chief security officer and the Department of Defense conducted a full investigation. The troops exposed to the gas also said they reported it to their superiors. But military officials in Washington and Baghdad said they could not confirm that an investigation had been conducted. Officials at the State Department, which contracted with Blackwater to provide diplomatic security, also could not confirm that an investigation had taken place.

About 20 to 25 American soldiers were at the checkpoint at the time of the incident, and at least 10 were exposed to the CS gas after "rotor wash" from the hovering helicopter pushed it toward them, according to officers who were there. A number of Iraqi civilians, both on foot and in cars waiting to go through the checkpoint, were also exposed. The gas can cause burning and watering eyes, skin irritation and coughing and difficulty breathing. Nausea and

vomiting can also result.

Blackwater says it was permitted to carry CS gas under its contract at the time with the State Department. According to a State Department official, the contract did not specifically authorize Blackwater personnel to carry or use CS, but it did not prohibit it.

The military, however, tightly controls use of riot control agents in war zones. They are banned by an international convention on chemical weapons endorsed by the United States, although a 1975 presidential order allows their use by the United States military in war zones under limited defensive circumstances and only with the approval of the president or a senior officer designated by the president.

"It is not allowed as a method or means of warfare," said Michael Schmitt, professor of international law at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. "There are very, very strict restrictions on the use of CS gas in a war zone."

In 2003, President Bush approved the use of riot control agents by the military in Iraq under the 1975 order, but only for such purposes as controlling rioting prisoners. At the time of Mr. Bush's decision, there were also concerns that the Iraqi Army would use civilians as shields, particularly in a last-ditch battle in Baghdad, and some officials believed that riot control agents might be effective in such circumstances to reduce casualties.

A United States military spokesman in Baghdad refused to describe the current rules of engagement governing the use of riot control agents, but former Army lawyers say their use requires the approval of the military's most senior commanders. "You never had a soldier with the authority to do it on his own," said Thomas J. Romig, a retired major general who served as the chief judge advocate general of the United

States Army from 2001 to 2005 and is now the dean of the Washburn School of Law in Topeka, Kan.

Several Army officers who have served in Iraq say they have never seen riot control agents used there by the United States military at all. Col. Robert Roth, commander of Task Force 4-64 AR of the Third Infantry Division, which was manning the Assassins' Gate checkpoint at the time of the Blackwater incident, said that his troops were not issued any of the chemicals.

"We didn't even possess any kind of riot control agents, and we couldn't employ them if we wanted to," said Colonel Roth, who is now serving in South Korea.

But the same tight controls apparently did not apply to Blackwater at the time of the incident. The company initially got a contract to provide security for American officials in Iraq with the Coalition Provisional Authority, an agreement which did not address the use of CS gas. After the authority went out of business, the State Department extended the contract for another year until rebidding it. Blackwater and two other companies — DynCorp and Triple Canopy — that now provide security are not permitted to use CS gas under their current contracts, the State Department said.

The State Department said that its lawyers did not believe the Blackwater incident violated any treaty agreements.

In a written statement, the State Department said the international chemical weapons convention "allows for the use of riot control agents, such as CS, where they are not used as a method of warfare. The use of a riot control agent near a checkpoint at an intersection in the circumstances described is not considered to be a method of warfare."

Yet experts said that the legal status was not so clear cut. "I have never seen anything that would make it

permissible to use tear gas to get traffic out of the way," Mr. Schmitt said. "In my view, it's an improper use of a riot control agent."

Blackwater's regular use of smoke canisters, which create clouds intended to impede attacks on convoys, also sets it apart from the military. While it does not raise the same legal issues as the CS gas, military officials said the practice raised policy concerns. Col. Roth said that he and other military officers frowned on the use of smoke, because it could be used for propaganda purposes to convince Iraqis that the United States was using chemical weapons.

Officers and soldiers who were hit by the CS gas, some of whom asked not to be identified because they were not authorized to discuss the incident, have described it with frustration. They said no weapons were being fired or any other violence that might have justified Blackwater's response.

In a personal journal posted online the day of the incident, Captain Clark provided a detailed description of what happened and included photos.

While standing at the checkpoint, he wrote, he saw a Blackwater helicopter overhead.

"We noticed that one of them was hovering right over the intersection in front of our checkpoint," he wrote. "There was a small amount of white smoke coming up from the intersection. I grabbed my radio and asked one of the guard towers what the smoke was. He answered that it looked like one of the helicopters dropped a smoke grenade on the cars in the intersection. I asked him why were they doing that, was there something going on in the intersection that would cause them to do this. He said, nope, couldn't see anything. Then I said, well what kind of smoke is it?"

"Before he could say

anything, I got my answer. My eyes started watering, my nose started burning and my face started to heat up. CS! I heard the lieutenant say, "Sir that's not smoke, it's CS gas."

After reporting the incident to his superiors, Captain Clark wrote, a convoy that the helicopter was protecting showed up. Because the gas caused a "complete traffic jam in front of our checkpoint," the captain wrote, "armored cars in the convoy made a U-turn — and threw another CS grenade."

"It just seemed incredibly stupid," he wrote. "The only thing we could figure out was for some reason, one of them figured that CS would somehow clear traffic. Why someone would think a substance that makes your eyes water, nose burn and face hurt would make a driver do anything other than stop is beyond me."

Army Staff Sgt. Kenny Mattingly also was puzzled. "We saw the Little Bird (Blackwater helicopter) come and hover right in front of the gate, and I saw one of the guys dropping a canister," Sergeant Mattingly said in an interview. "There was no reason for dropping the CS gas. We didn't hear any gunfire or anything. There was no incident under way."

Washington Post
January 10, 2008
Pg. 18

5. New Estimate Of Violent Deaths Among Iraqis Is Lower

By David Brown and Joshua Partlow, Washington Post Staff Writers

A new survey estimates that 151,000 Iraqis died from violence in the three years following the U.S.-led invasion of the country. Roughly 9 out of 10 of those deaths were a consequence of U.S. military operations, insurgent attacks and sectarian warfare.

The survey, conducted by

the Iraqi government and the World Health Organization, also found a 60 percent increase in nonviolent deaths -- from such causes as childhood infections and kidney failure -- during the period. The results, which will be published in the New England Journal of Medicine at the end of the month, are the latest of several widely divergent and controversial estimates of mortality attributed to the Iraq war.

The three-year toll of violent deaths calculated in the survey is one-quarter the size of that found in a smaller survey by Iraqi and Johns Hopkins University researchers published in the journal *Lancet* in 2006.

Both teams used the same method -- a random sample of houses throughout the country. For the new study, however, surveyors visited 23 times as many places and interviewed five times as many households. Surveyors also got more outside supervision in the recent study; that wasn't possible in the spring of 2006 when the Johns Hopkins survey was conducted.

Despite reaching a lower estimate of total deaths, the epidemiologists found what they termed "a massive death toll in the wake of the 2003 invasion."

Iraq's population-wide mortality rate nearly doubled, and the death rate from violence increased tenfold after the coalition attack. Men between 15 and 60 were at the greatest risk. Their death rate from all causes tripled, and their risk of dying a violent death went up elevenfold.

Iraq's health minister, Salih al-Hasnawi, in a conference call held by WHO yesterday morning, said: "Certainly I believe this number. I think that this is a very sound survey with accurate methodology."

Other experts not involved in the research also expressed confidence in the findings, even though, as with the earlier

survey, the 151,000-death estimate has a wide range of statistical uncertainty, from a low of 104,000 to a high of 223,000.

"Overall, this is a very good study," said Paul Spiegel, a medical epidemiologist at the United Nations High Commission on Refugees in Geneva. "What they have done that other studies have not is try to compensate for the inaccuracies and difficulties of these surveys, triangulating to get information from other sources."

Spiegel added that "this does seem more believable to me" than the earlier survey, which estimated 601,000 deaths from violence over the same period.

U.S. military officials yesterday pointed to the great disparity between the two estimates, noting privately that it underscores the potential for inaccuracies in such surveys. The Defense Department has not released any estimates of civilian deaths and has said often that the military takes precautions to prevent civilian casualties, while the United States' enemies in Iraq deliberately target civilians.

"It would be difficult for the U.S. to precisely determine the number of civilian deaths in Iraq as a result of insurgent activity," said Lt. Col. Mark Ballesteros, a Pentagon spokesman. "The Iraqi Ministry of Health would be in a better position, with all of its records, to provide more accurate information on deaths in Iraq."

Les Roberts, an epidemiologist now at Columbia University who helped direct the Johns Hopkins survey, also praised the new one. While both found a large increase in mortality, his found that much more of it was caused by violence.

"My gut feeling is that most of the difference between the two studies is a reluctance to report to the government a death due to violence," he said. "If your son is fighting the

government and died, that may not be something you'd want to admit to the government."

The new study was conducted between August 2006 and March 2007 in all regions of the country, including the Kurdish northern area. Surveyors visited about 1,000 randomly selected geographic areas (called "clusters") and interviewed people in 9,345 households. They were asked whether anyone in the household -- defined as people living under the same roof "and eating from one pot" -- had died from June 2001 through June 2006.

Each death was assigned to one of 23 causes. "Violent death" covered shootings, stabbings, bombings and other intentional injuries, and included civilian, military and police deaths but not suicides and traffic fatalities unrelated to roadside bombs.

Danger prevented surveyors from visiting 11 percent of the chosen clusters. Deaths in those areas were estimated using the ratio of deaths in the region to deaths in other regions as found in the Iraq Body Count, a continuous count of reported and verifiable violent deaths of civilians kept by an independent, London-based group. (That count, which even its organizers agree misses many deaths, registered 47,668 deaths from the U.S.-led invasion through June 2006).

Previous research has shown that household surveys typically miss 30 to 50 percent of deaths. One reason is that some families that have suffered violent deaths leave the survey area. Demographers think that as many as 2 million Iraqis have fled the country since the war began, and the 151,000-death estimate includes an adjustment for this.

Calculating death tolls in Iraq has been notoriously difficult.

Some people are kidnapped and disappear, and others turn up months or years later in mass graves. Some are

buried or otherwise disposed of without being recorded. In particularly violent areas, local governments have effectively ceased to function, and there are ineffective channels for collecting and passing information between hospitals, morgues and the central government.

One senior Health Ministry official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said there are detailed casualty numbers, but "we have strict instructions not to give them out." The U.N. human rights mission in Iraq has criticized the Iraqi government for withholding information on civilian casualties.

Last month, Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, provided a U.S. military chart on civilian deaths in Iraq between January 2006 and December 2007, but specific monthly tolls were not included. A rough estimate based on this chart, which synthesized Iraqi and U.S. figures, indicated that some 40,000 civilians had died in the past two years in Iraq.

Jalil Hadi al-Shimmari, who oversees the western Baghdad health department, said the 151,000 total seems roughly accurate but is probably a "modest" one. "The real number might be bigger than this," he said.

The study employed about 400 interviewers. Some were employees of the Iraq Health Ministry, and others were local health workers, such as pharmacists, midwives and nurses. Women surveyors were used to interview women in the households. Different religions and sects were represented.

"They built up the trust of the community, especially in the difficult areas," said Naeema al-Gasseer, WHO's representative in Iraq.

One Iraqi official working on the survey was killed in random violence on the way to work. A few interviewers were detained by local militia under suspicion they were spies. One surveyor was kidnapped and

ransomed.

"They did risk their lives. There was a determination to make it a success," Gasseer said.

Partlow reported from Baghdad. Staff writer Josh White contributed to this report.

New York Times
January 10, 2008

6. W.H.O. Says Iraq Civilian Death Toll Higher Than Cited

By Lawrence K. Altman and Richard A. Oppel Jr.

The World Health Organization on Wednesday waded into the controversial subject of Iraqi civilian deaths, publishing a study that estimated that the number of deaths from the start of the war through June 2006 was at least twice as high as the oft-cited Iraq Body Count.

The study is the latest in a long series of attempts to come up with realistic numbers of civilian deaths. The numbers are politically fraught, and researchers' work has been further complicated by problems in collecting data while working in a war zone.

The estimates have varied widely. The Iraq Body Count, a nongovernmental group based in Britain that bases its numbers on news media accounts, put the number of civilians dead at 47,668 during the same period of time as the World Health Organization study, the W.H.O. report said. President Bush in the past used a number that was similar to one put forward at the time by the Iraq Body Count.

But another study, by Johns Hopkins, which has come under criticism for its methodology, cited an estimate of about 600,000 dead between the war's start, in March 2003, and July 2006.

The World Health Organization said its study, based on interviews with families, indicated with a 95 percent degree of statistical

certainty that between 104,000 and 223,000 civilians had died. It based its estimate of 151,000 deaths on that range.

Those figures made violence the leading cause of adult male deaths in Iraq and one of the leading causes of death for the population as a whole, the health organization research team reported online in the New England Journal of Medicine. More than half the violent deaths occurred in Baghdad.

While the new study appears to have the broadest scope to date, increasing its reliability, well known limitations of such efforts in war areas make it unlikely to resolve debate about the extent of the killing in Iraq.

Iraqi officials gave conflicting assessments of the newest study, with one senior Health Ministry official praising it and another saying the numbers were exaggerated.

The White House said that it had not seen the study and would not comment on its estimated death toll, but that the recent increase in American forces had reduced civilian and military casualties. "We mourn the deaths of all people in Iraq," said Jeanie Mamo, a White House spokeswoman.

In any case, the study ended four months after the bombing of a revered Shiite shrine in Samarra helped set off a wave of killings throughout Baghdad and other mixed Sunni-Shiite areas. So because of its timing, the study missed the period of what is believed to be the worst sectarian killings, during the latter half of 2006 and the first eight months of 2007.

The figures on violent deaths were part of a large study of chronic illnesses, mental health status, environmental risk factors and other factors affecting family health in Iraq. The figures were based on interviews with 9,345 heads of households across the country that had been selected according to statistical methods that are standard in peaceful

areas. The interviewers, who were employees of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, had been trained how to ask the survey questions and to assign the stated causes of deaths.

The surveyors largely conducted their work in August and September 2006. In Baghdad, Shiite militiamen, often acting in coordination with or with the acquiescence of fellow Shiites in the Iraq security forces, purged many neighborhoods of Sunnis. Many were grabbed, handcuffed, shot in the head and dumped with other victims. Sunni insurgents continued their campaign of terrorizing Shiite areas with car bombs and other attacks.

In fact, one co-author, Louay Hakki Rasheed, was killed on his way to work on Aug. 2, 2007. The extraordinarily dangerous security situation prevented surveyors from visiting about 11 percent of the areas that the researchers had intended to visit.

Most of the places that were off-limits to the researchers were in Anbar Province, the Sunni-dominated region of western Iraq. While there have been significant security improvements in Anbar in the past year — after Sunni tribal leaders joined with United States troops to drive out extremist militants — in 2006 the province was a lawless haven dominated by insurgents.

Most of the other areas into which the researchers could not go for safety reasons were in Baghdad, which at the time was being ripped into balkanized concentrations of Shiites and Sunnis. Some neighborhoods looked like urban ghost towns, as the residents who did not have the money or the ability to flee the country stayed holed up in their homes rather than risk being abducted or killed by the death squads and gangs of criminals and insurgents who roamed much of the capital freely.

Iraqi authorities often have asserted that estimates of deaths provided by outside groups and researchers are too high. But there is a significant political element to the numbers, and as the surge in violent deaths in 2006 from death squad activities and other killings became a major embarrassment, the Iraqi government moved to sharply curb access to the data.

At the same time, Iraqi officials have asserted that they made improvements in their ability to track fatalities using morgue counts and other means. One shortcoming has always been that the corpses of many victims, if they are identifiable, are taken by family members straight to the cemetery, bypassing the morgue and hospital. Yet Iraqi authorities say that relatives still have an incentive to obtain a death certificate because it is required for inheritance, for government compensation, and for other purposes.

In a telephone news conference organized by the health organization, a voice identified as that of the Iraqi health minister, Salih Mahdi Mutlab al-Hasnawi, said, "It is a very sound survey, and the sample is a good sample," and "I believe in those numbers."

But a senior official in the Iraq Health Ministry's inspector general's office cast doubt on the findings, saying 151,000 was far too high. The official, who said he was not allowed to speak about the matter and refused to allow his name to be used, said the numbers cited by the study were much larger than figures tracked by the ministry. But he refused to provide any alternative tallies for the death toll, saying he was not authorized to do so.

Mohamed M. Ali, a health agency statistician and co-author of the report, said that "in the absence of comprehensive death registration and hospital reporting, household surveys are the best we can do." Even

then, the figures collected are likely to be underestimates because "some homes could not be visited because of high levels of insecurity and more people move residence in times of conflict," Mr. Hasnawi, the health minister, said in a statement issued by the W.H.O.

To come up with estimates for the 11 percent of target areas they could not reach, the researchers used a formula that was based primarily on the Iraq Body Count to determine how much higher the number of deaths could have been there than in other areas of the country.

The Iraq Body Count project bases its numbers on news media reports. That count registered 47,668 civilian deaths because of violence in the study period, a figure that the health organization considered low because many such deaths are not reported in the news media.

The Johns Hopkins study, which was published in *The Lancet* in October 2006, estimated that 601,027 Iraqi civilians had died from violence. That study, which was conducted with researchers from Al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad, involved one-fifth the number of households and one-twentieth the number of areas surveyed by the new W.H.O. study.

*Gardiner Harris
contributed reporting..*

CNN
January 9, 2008

7. Six Soldiers Killed In Booby-Trapped House In Iraq's Diyala Province

By Jamie McIntyre
**Lou Dobbs Tonight
(CNN), 7:00 PM**

LOU DOBBS: Good evening, everybody. We begin tonight with news that nine of our troops have been killed in Iraq over the past 48 hours. Six of our soldiers were killed

today on an explosion north of Baghdad. Three were killed in a separate attack yesterday northwest of the Iraqi capital. The soldiers were killed as thousands of U.S. and Iraqi troops began an offensive against al Qaeda in northern Iraq. Jamie McIntyre has our report from the Pentagon. Jamie?

JAMIE MCINTYRE, CNN SR. PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT: Lou, in recent weeks the trends in Iraq have looked pretty positive, but today showed that on the battlefield, something that looks peaceful can turn deadly dangerous in the blink of an eye.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MCINTYRE (voice-over): It was a booby trapped house in Iraq's Diyala Province, much like this one bombed by a U.S. F-16 a few days ago, that inflicted a heavy toll on the U.S., then the trap was discovered in time and the house destroyed. But in the latest incident, the U.S. wasn't so lucky. Six soldiers were killed, four wounded. Rigging houses with high explosives is not a new tactic, but it's just part of the deadly arsenal that al Qaeda is using to fight back against the recent successes of the U.S. and its Iraqi citizen allies.

MAJ. GEN. MARK HERTLING, MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION NORTH: There has been a marked increase in AQI activity in Diyala Province in the form of high profile spectacular events.

MCINTYRE: This latest high profile attack has put the U.S. death toll right back on the fast track. After only 23 Americans were killed in all of last month, already 17 have died this month with more than 20 days to go. But as this video shot from an unmanned predator spy plane seems to show, al Qaeda is using murder and intimidation to target so-called CLCs, concerned local citizens who have been the biggest reason behind a

drop in violence.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: What you're about to see on the film are three individuals pulling another individual from the trunk of a car in the middle of an open field. And then throwing him into a ditch and assassinating him.

MCINTYRE: The U.S. military hopes the brutality will be al Qaeda's Achilles heel. That it will backfire as it did last year when Iraqis turned against al Qaeda in Anbar Province and other areas.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That, in fact, is what's generated the concern local citizens in the first place, and it's sort of a reverse counter-intuitive logic. They're trying to intimidate people that join them by killing them. It's causing more people to go against them.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

MCINTYRE: Whenever violence flares in Iraq, the U.S. military has the same explanation, they're attacking our success. Military commanders also say that the recent events give some justification for tempering their recent optimism with a healthy dose of caution. Lou?

DOBBS: Jamie, thank you, Jamie McIntyre from the Pentagon.

Washington Post
January 10, 2008
Pg. 4

8. U.S. To Bolster Forces In Afghanistan Pentagon Cites NATO's Failure to Provide Additional Troops

By Ann Scott Tyson,
Washington Post Staff Writer

The U.S. military is planning to deploy about 3,000 Marines to Afghanistan this spring to counter an expected offensive by Taliban insurgents, a Pentagon spokesman said yesterday, citing NATO allies' failure to provide additional combat troops.

The reinforcements would be in place by April and stay

for about seven months to try to bring down violence, which rose significantly last year, leading the Bush administration to reassess its Afghanistan strategy. Overall attacks were up 27 percent, with a spike of 60 percent in the volatile southern province of Helmand, where the Taliban resurgence is strongest, according to Pentagon data.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates will receive the formal order Friday to deploy a Marine air-ground task force and a Marine battalion to Afghanistan, said Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell. Gates does not plan to approve the order immediately but will weigh it carefully because the Marine deployment would represent a "serious allocation of forces," Morrell said.

Bush administration officials said a political decision has been made that the U.S. military must shoulder a greater combat burden, given that the United States has failed to persuade NATO allies to contribute the thousands of extra combat troops needed to train Afghan forces and provide security. "The commander needs additional forces there ... and the allies are not inclined to provide them, so we are looking at providing additional combat forces," Morrell said.

The United States now provides about 26,000 of the roughly 54,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan and has the lead combat role in the eastern part of the country, while U.S. Special Operations forces operate in all regions. British, Canadian, Australian and Dutch forces play key combat roles in southern Afghanistan, where violence has surged over the past year, particularly suicide and roadside bombings.

During a trip to Afghanistan last month, Gates said he was not inclined to supply the additional combat troops and continued to press NATO. But now, Morrell said, Gates has decided "to stop hammering our allies for things

which may not be politically possible for them to deliver."

NATO force commanders have acknowledged that they lack enough troops to control territory in the nation of almost 32 million people, allowing the Taliban to recapture district centers following NATO offensives against the insurgents. That shortage led the top NATO commander in Afghanistan, U.S. Army Gen. Dan K. McNeill, to ask for at least three more combat battalions, they said.

Many NATO countries have placed restrictions on their troops that keep them out of combat. Other countries, such as Canada, operate without such restrictions but say their forces are already stretched.

"It's difficult to see how Canada could contribute more without a negative impact" on sustaining the troops' presence, Canada's army chief, Lt. Gen. Andrew Leslie, said in Washington last month. Canada has about 2,500 soldiers in southern Afghanistan.

Gates has decided that the Marines going to Afghanistan will not come from Iraq's Anbar province, as called for under an earlier Marine Corps proposal, because the situation in Iraq remains tenuous, Pentagon and administration officials said.

The plan to send Marines to Afghanistan was first reported yesterday by ABC News.

The Marine air-ground task force will go to Helmand, where its mission will be "to beat back another spring offensive," Morrell said. Fighting in Afghanistan tends to be seasonal, with a lull in winter when the weather makes travel difficult. British forces now lead the NATO command in southern Afghanistan, including Helmand.

Leslie acknowledged that Taliban gains in southern Afghanistan are a serious challenge. "The south is on a knife edge," he said. "Failure to

secure the south could lead to unpleasant second- and third-order effects."

The Pentagon plan would dispatch a Marine battalion to train the Afghan army and police, partially meeting a shortfall of about 3,500 trainers for the police force, which U.S. officials say suffers from corruption and illiteracy. More trainers are needed for the Afghan army, following a decision by the Pentagon last month to increase the manpower goal of that force from 70,000 to 80,000.

Staff writer Karen DeYoung contributed to this report.

Los Angeles Times
January 10, 2008

9. Sending Marines To Afghanistan Proposed

Gates has yet to OK the idea to ship 3,200 more troops for a rotation. More NATO forces are still sought.

By Julian E. Barnes and Peter Spiegel, Los Angeles Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON —Faced with rising violence, U.S. military officials have proposed sending additional troops to Afghanistan this spring in an effort to counter the growing power of Taliban militants.

Pentagon officials want to deploy 3,200 Marines to Afghanistan for a standard seven-month stint and would not replace them when they leave. Added to the 27,000 U.S. troops there, the additional Marines would boost the U.S. force to the highest level since the 2001 invasion.

The proposal is supported by Adm. Michael G. Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and could be submitted to Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates as early as Friday. But Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary, emphasized that Gates would not rubber stamp it.

"The secretary is going to want to think long and hard

about it before he approves it, because it involves a serious additional commitment of U.S. forces," Morrell said.

Gates for months has tried to persuade U.S. allies to send additional troops. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization commands about 42,000 troops in Afghanistan, including about 15,000 of the Americans there.

The number of bombings and clashes with Taliban-aligned militants increased in 2007, and 117 U.S. military personnel were killed, according to the independent website icasualties.org.

Pentagon planners have examined the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy and troop build-up in Iraq to determine which tactics and strategies could work in Afghanistan. But Morrell said the proposal for additional Marines grew less out of the lessons of Iraq and more from the realization that, though weakened, the Taliban is a "stubborn" problem.

"It's based upon the fact the Taliban remains a persistent threat and commanders on the ground feel that additional forces are necessary to take on an additional spring offensive," he said.

The majority of the Marine force would serve in southern Afghanistan, one of the more violent areas. They would join other U.S. forces as well as troops from Canada, Britain and the Netherlands. A smaller group of Marines would train Afghan security forces.

The proposal to send more U.S. troops follows months of unsuccessful efforts by Gates and Mullen to persuade NATO countries to send additional combat battalions and trainers. At a congressional hearing last month, Gates said he intended to continue applying pressure.

"I am not ready to let NATO off the hook in Afghanistan at this point," Gates said.

In a meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, a few days later,

Gates was told by several NATO defense ministers that domestic politics prevented them from sending more troops.

U.S. planners consequently have sought other ways to meet a request for 7,500 more troops from Army Gen. Dan K. McNeill, who serves as commander of NATO forces in the country. But a military official said Wednesday that sending Marines would not mean that Washington would ease the pressure on its allies.

"The U.S. leadership would still like NATO to meet its commitments," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the proposal. "We still need NATO nations to exert a greater effort."

Morrell said that the need for more NATO forces remained.

"If anything, it increases the pressure on NATO," Morrell said. "It shows we are stepping up to the plate to fill part of the shortfall of 7,500 and other countries should dig deep and provide what they can to fulfill the rest."

Military officials compared the extra Marines to a buildup of U.S. forces last spring. Gates ordered extended tours for members of a brigade of the 10th Mountain Division to augment a NATO offensive against the Taliban.

The new Marines would arrive in April, when the winter snows have melted and heavy fighting is expected to resume.

Wall Street Journal (wsj.com)
January 10, 2008

10. Afghanistan Welcomes Plan To Boost US Troop Numbers

KABUL (AFP) -- Afghanistan on Thursday welcomed U.S. plans to send up to 3,000 additional marines to counter an expected Taliban spring offensive but insisted

the long-term solution is to boost Afghan forces.

The defense ministry said more international troops are needed to battle the extremist militia, which is believed to be preparing to launch an offensive as soon as the winter snows melt.

"At present, we need foreign forces to maintain peace and security. We welcome the increase in numbers and facilities," ministry spokesman General Mohammad Zahir Azimi told AFP.

"But the long-term solution is that we need support to increase Afghan forces in quality and quantity, so they can take up the responsibility for their country."

Since the collapse of the hardline Taliban regime in late 2001, Afghanistan has seen a significant slowdown in the militants' activities each winter, followed by a surge when the weather improves in spring.

"We don't expect any particular spring offensive this year, just the normal increase in activities every spring," Azimi said.

The Afghan army is expected to reach 70,000 troops in the first half of this year.

"The year 2008 is going to be different from last year. The Afghan army is getting better and bigger and well-equipped," he said.

"We don't expect a major speedy change, but slowly and steadily our security forces are expanding."

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates is considering sending about 3,000 marines to Afghanistan in anticipation of a spike in Taliban attacks once roads and mountains become passable again in spring, a Pentagon spokesman said Wednesday.

The marines would make up part of the shortfall of 7,500 troops, after North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries failed to meet promises to provide men and combat

equipment despite a rise in Taliban activity last year.

"The commander needs additional forces there, our allies are not in a position to provide them, so we are now looking at perhaps carrying a bit of that additional load," Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said.

Coalition commanders have complained that they are short three infantry battalions, 3,000 trainers and helicopters, which were promised but not delivered by NATO members.

The proposal to send marines to fill the gap goes before Gates on Friday but he is unlikely to make a final decision at that time, Morrell said in Washington.

Currently, there are 26,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, most of them under the 40,000-strong NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.

Wall Street Journal
January 10, 2008
Pg. 4

11. Britain Sees Role For Afghan Tribes

Militias Would Help Fight Taliban, but U.S. Reaction Is Split

By Yochi J. Dreazen

British military commanders in Afghanistan are pushing for the creation of armed tribal militias to aid in the fight against the Taliban, underscoring Western concern about deteriorating security in the country.

The British proposal takes a page from the U.S. military playbook in Iraq, where American forces persuaded many Sunni Arab tribes to join the fight against religious-extremist groups, including al Qaeda.

But this time, the proposal has drawn a mixed reaction from American officials, who debated and rejected a similar idea in 2004, saying their aim was to build national forces. Afghanistan, unlike Iraq, has a long history of militias falling under the sway of local

warlords.

Instead, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said last month that the U.S. might be forced to send fresh combat troops to Afghanistan if matters continue to worsen. Pentagon officials said yesterday they are considering plans to send several thousand additional U.S. troops.

For now, with the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan facing manpower shortages, British officials said the militias would be helpful in expanding the number of Afghans willing to fight the Taliban. The plan calls for creating new forces modeled on *arbakai*, the centuries-old village militias.

"They'd be focused solely on defensive activity, not to replace the national forces, but to assist and help them," said Nick Allan, a spokesman for the British Embassy in Washington.

The British proposal, still in planning, comes as fear grows in both Washington and London that early success in Afghanistan may be slipping away.

Last year was the deadliest for U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. Suicide bombings and civilian casualties also rose sharply, steadily eroding the popularity of President Hamid Karzai's central government.

Many senior American commanders attribute security problems to a shortage of foreign troops. NATO, which commands a 41,000-person force, has struggled to find nations willing to contribute more. The U.S. has 15,000 soldiers and Marines in the NATO force, and about 11,000 others under separate American command. That compares with 155,000 deployed to Iraq.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown first raised the *arbakai* idea publicly in mid-December, telling Parliament that his government would be increasing its "support for community defense initiatives, where local

volunteers are recruited to defend homes and families modeled on traditional Afghan *arbakai*." The British envision using the forces to improve conditions in the southern province of Helmand, a longtime Taliban stronghold.

The *arbakai* system has been a mainstay of remote regions of eastern Afghanistan for centuries. Clans from the region's tribes take turns providing small numbers of fighters to each village. In times of emergency, the tribesmen pound drums to summon hundreds of additional fighters.

British officials said they would like to recruit small numbers of tribal fighters in a handful of villages to evaluate how well the forces perform in defending their communities from the Taliban. The fighters would use their existing firearms and wouldn't receive any new weapons, British officials said.

Some American officers argue that creating such forces may help win over tribal fighters who have long been hostile to the U.S.-led coalition and the Afghan central government. Others are far more skeptical. Gen. Dan McNeil, the top American officer in Afghanistan, believes the *arbakai* model is alien to southern Afghanistan and probably wouldn't work there, according to a spokesman, Maj. Charles Anthony.

"This is a system that depends on the tribal structures in a given area," Maj. Anthony said. "It has not worked previously in the south, in Helmand," because the province has a less cohesive tribal hierarchy.

The U.S. military already has studied a variant of the *arbakai* concept. U.S. Special Forces commanders proposed building tribal forces in eastern Afghanistan as far back as 2004; senior Pentagon officials rejected the idea.

"We shouted it down," said Joseph Collins, a professor at the National War College

who was serving in a senior Pentagon post at the time. "We said we'd started down a path of building national forces, and we needed to continue that approach."

Ali Jalali, Afghanistan's interior minister until the fall of 2005 and now a professor at the National Defense University, Washington, said the Karzai government found *arbakai* forces useful in helping maintain security in eastern Afghanistan during presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004-05. But he opposes the British proposal to establish the tribal forces in southern Afghanistan, arguing they can be trusted only in areas where the central government has a strong presence.

"If the Taliban are there and the government is not," he said, "the tribes will nominally swear allegiance to the central government but practically do as they please."

CBS, CNN
January 9, 2008

12. TV News Coverage From Pentagon Correspondents

CBS Evening News, 6:30 PM

KATIE COURIC: Now in other news. Talk of a new troop surge tonight; this time in Afghanistan. David Martin reports from the Pentagon.

DAVID MARTIN: Just as American troops are beginning to withdraw from Iraq, the Joint Chiefs of Staff has drawn up a plan for sending more troops to the so-called forgotten war in Afghanistan. The plan, which has not yet been approved by Defense Secretary Gates, calls for sending 3,000 Marines to Afghanistan in time for an expected upsurge in fighting next spring. That would bring the overall number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan to 30,000. Some of the Marines would be sent directly into combat in Taliban strongholds in southern Afghanistan. The

rest would help train the Afghan army and police.

The plan was drawn up after NATO countries failed to respond to a request from the U.S. commander in Afghanistan for more troops to contain Taliban forces operating out of sanctuaries in Pakistan. The plan is expected to be presented to Secretary Gates later this week. If he approves and the president agrees, the U.S. will embark on a troop surge in Afghanistan, just as the one in Iraq is ending.

David Martin, CBS News, the Pentagon.

The Situation Room (CNN), 5:00 PM

WOLF BLITZER: We're getting an important development just coming in to CNN from Barbara Starr. She's standing by right now at the Pentagon. What are you learning, Barbara?

BARBARA STARR, CNN PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT: Well Wolf, CNN has learned that Defense Secretary Robert Gates is on the verge of sending 3,000 additional combat forces to Afghanistan. This is most likely to be 3,000 U.S. marines, both a combination of ground and air forces. This is a request that is coming to the Pentagon directly from the NATO commander in Afghanistan. He simply does not have enough troops due to the rise of the Taliban and al Qaeda threat in Afghanistan. NATO has so far not contributed the full complement of troops that is needed, so they are coming to the Pentagon.

As of this afternoon, this proposal is on Defense Secretary Robert Gates' desk. According to senior U.S. military officials, there is every indication he will approve it and the surge, if you will, for Afghanistan may well be underway. 3,000 more troops possibly very quickly going to Afghanistan in the next several weeks, as soon as Secretary Gates signs those papers.

Wolf?

BLITZER: A tenuous situation in Afghanistan right now. All right. Barbara, thanks very much for that news.

USA Today
January 10, 2008
Pg. 6

13. Iran Threat Shadows Bush's Mideast Visit

Region's safety on many leaders' minds

By Richard Wolf, USA Today
TEL AVIV — President Bush had been on Israeli soil just minutes Wednesday when one of the top issues bothering the Middle East leaders he is scheduled to meet on his trip was broached: Iran.

"We take your advice to not underestimate the Iranian threat," Israeli President Shimon Peres told Bush at Ben Gurion International Airport. "Iran should not underestimate our resolve for self-defense."

The main mission of Bush's eight-day trip to the Middle East, which began Wednesday, is to nudge peace talks between Israel and its Palestinian neighbors — but the subtext is Iran's regional threat.

In the past several days, Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and national security adviser Stephen Hadley have sought to assure those nations that the United States still considers Iran a danger, despite a U.S. intelligence report last month that concluded Iran's nuclear weapons program was halted in 2003.

"Iran is a threat to world peace," Bush said Wednesday after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert at his residence in Jerusalem. "The international community must understand with clarity the threat that Iran represents to world peace."

Rice had made clear earlier that Iran would be a major topic of discussion throughout Bush's trip, which

includes stops in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

"There will be discussions of Iran in Israel, in the Gulf, all around, because Iran is the single most important, greatest threat to the kind of Middle East that we all want to see," she said Tuesday before accompanying Bush on his trip. "It's a supporter of terrorism in Iraq, in Lebanon, in the Palestinian territories. It has nuclear ambitions."

The tough talk on Iran comes after five armed Iranian boats took aggressive action Sunday near three U.S. Navy warships in international waters. Administration officials called it reckless.

"There will be serious consequences if they attack our ships, pure and simple," Bush said in Israel. "My advice to them is, 'Don't do it.'"

The Associated Press reported Wednesday that an unnamed official for Iran's Revolutionary Guards said footage of the incident released Tuesday by the Pentagon was "compiled using file pictures and the audio has been fabricated." State Department spokesman Sean McCormack called the claim "just ridiculous."

The National Intelligence Estimate released by the United States last month said Iran continues to enrich uranium and seek longer-range missiles, even if it stopped trying to make a nuclear weapon. That report became the subject of confusion and conspiracy theories in many Middle Eastern nations. In Israel, it was flatly disputed; the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* reported this week that Defense Minister Ehud Barak would show Bush his nation's "Iran dossier."

The risk for the United States and Israel is that other Arab nations will seek conciliation with Iran rather than confrontation. To stop that from happening, the Bush administration notified Congress last month that it

intends to sell about \$20 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, while increasing aid to Israel. "We have been reassuring our allies for quite some time now by increasing ... their defense capability," Rice said.

Mark Regev, Olmert's spokesman, said the issue of Iran has taken on added importance because officials want to stop Iran's nuclear program in its tracks. So far, the Bush administration and the United Nations Security Council have used economic sanctions as a tactic.

"They don't have a bomb yet," Regev said. "We think their nuclear program is still stoppable."

Olmert said, "We must do everything possible to thwart them."

The administration wants to solve the situation with Iran diplomatically, but Rice said this week that "the president doesn't take options off the table."

That will be welcomed by the Israelis, said Shlomo Avineri, a Hebrew University of Jerusalem political scientist and former Foreign Ministry official. "What the Israelis would expect from the United States is a very muscular response" to Iranian aggression, Avineri said.

New York Times
January 10, 2008

14. Iran Accuses U.S. Of Faking Persian Gulf Video

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN — Iran's Revolutionary Guard accused the United States on Wednesday of fabricating a video showing Iranian speedboats confronting United States Navy warships in the Persian Gulf over the weekend, according to a report carried by the semiofficial Fars news agency and state-run television.

"Images released by the U.S. Department of Defense about the Navy vessels were

made from file pictures, and the audio was fabricated," an unnamed Revolutionary Guard official said, according to Fars, which has close links to the Revolutionary Guard. It was the first time Iran had commented on the video that the Pentagon released Tuesday.

The audio includes a statement that says, "I am coming to you," and adds, "You will explode after a few minutes." The voice was recorded from the internationally recognized channel for ship-to-ship communications, Navy officials have said.

The Pentagon immediately dismissed the assertion that the video, which shows Iranian speedboats maneuvering around and among the Navy warships, had been fabricated. Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman, said Iran's "allegation is absurd, factually incorrect and reflects the lack of seriousness with which they take this serious incident."

Naval and Pentagon officials have said that the video and audio were recorded separately, then combined. On Wednesday, Pentagon officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak officially, said they were still trying to determine if the transmission came from the speedboats or elsewhere.

The unnamed Revolutionary Guard official quoted in the Iranian news media asserted that the video of the speedboats had been released to coincide with a trip by President Bush to the Middle East and "was in line with a project of the Western media to create fear." The official said the sounds and images on the video did not go together, adding, "It is very clear that they are fake."

The Fars news agency had said that the confrontation had been fabricated to present Iran as a threat to its neighbors before Mr. Bush's trip so he could justify United States forces in the gulf.

The episode was initially described Monday by American officials who said it took place Sunday in the Strait of Hormuz.

They said five armed Iranian speedboats approached three United States Navy warships in international waters, then maneuvered aggressively as a radio threat was issued that the American ships would be blown up. No shots were fired. The video runs slightly more than four minutes and, Pentagon officials said, was shot from the bridge of the guided-missile destroyer Hopper.

The audio includes a heavily accented voice warning in English that the Navy warships would explode. However, the recording carries no ambient noise — the sounds of a motor, the sea or wind — that would be expected if the broadcast had been made from one of the five small boats that sped around the three-ship American convoy.

Pentagon officials said they could not rule out that the broadcast might have come from shore, or from another ship nearby, although it might have come from one of the five fast boats with a high-quality radio system.

The Revolutionary Guards arrested 15 British sailors in Persian Gulf waters last year and accused them of entering Iranian waters. They were kept in a secret location for two weeks before they were released in April. Their boats were seized by Iranian authorities and have not been returned. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Wednesday that Iran was willing to return the boats but that British authorities had not followed up, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Thom Shanker contributed reporting from Washington.

Washington Post
January 10, 2008
Pg. 15

15. Top Iranian General

Hit With Sanctions

U.S. Also Singles Out 3 Exiled Iraqis For Fomenting Violence in Iraq

By Robin Wright, Washington Post Staff Writer

The United States yesterday slapped sanctions on a top Iranian general and three exiled Iraqis based in Iran and Syria for fomenting violence in Iraq, as President Bush lashed out again at Tehran for last weekend's showdown between U.S. and Iranian naval vessels.

In a news conference with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Bush called Iran a "threat to world peace" and warned that it would face "serious consequences" if it tried to attack U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf. All options remain on the table, Bush said, a statement that some diplomatic and military officials in Washington said inflated the significance of the brief incident Sunday between five small Iranian speedboats and three U.S. warships.

Iran countered yesterday that a four-minute video of the encounter released by the United States on Tuesday was compiled from file pictures and fabricated audio. Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman called the allegation "absurd" and said that "explanations of this nature reflect an inherent disregard for the seriousness of this incident."

The rising tensions led France and Saudi Arabia to call on Washington and Tehran to show caution. "We hope this incident will not be repeated. We face a constant danger of escalation, so self-restraint is necessary for all players in the region," Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal said at a news conference on the eve of Bush's visit to the kingdom.

He also appeared to rebuff U.S. efforts to raise the stakes over Iran. "We're a neighbor to Iran in the Gulf, which is a small area, so we're keen for harmony and peace among countries in the region," Faisal said. "We have relations with Iran and we talk with them,

and if we felt any danger we have relations that allow us to talk about it."

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner warned Iran about taking dangerous action, but cautioned the two nations to show "moderation."

The United States and Iran have been competing for influence in the Persian Gulf area. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was expected to visit Iraq this month, and Tehran angled for him to be in Baghdad during Bush's eight-day Middle East tour, U.S. officials said. Iraqi officials then reconsidered the visit's timing. "The Iraqis were wise enough to see that that would not be the best move," said a senior U.S. official familiar with the diplomacy.

Ahmadinejad traveled to Abu Dhabi two days after Vice President Cheney's visit in May.

Shortly after Bush's comments in Israel yesterday, the Treasury Department announced the new economic sanctions on the four individuals and a television station in Syria.

"Iran and Syria are fueling violence and destruction in Iraq," said a statement by Stuart A. Levey, undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence. "Today's action brings to light the lethal action of these individuals and we call on the international community to stand with us in isolating them from the global economy."

Treasury imposed the sanctions under Executive Order 13438, which targets insurgents and militia groups. It freezes any assets -- such as property or financial holdings -- under U.S. jurisdiction or any transactions with U.S. citizens or entities.

The administration named Brig. Gen. Ahmed Foruzandeh, leader of Iran's Quds Force operations in Iraq, for allegedly directing the assassinations of Iraqis and ordering Iranian intelligence to provoke deeper sectarian violence in Iraq by

targeting Shiites and Sunnis. The Quds Force is the elite foreign operations branch of Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

Foruzandeh also financed operations by both Shiite and Sunni extremist groups against U.S. forces in Iraq, the Treasury said. He drove explosives and other war materiel into Iraq for use in suicide bombings, and organized training courses for Iraqi militants in Iranian camps, it added.

Foruzandeh, who operates out of the Revolutionary Guard Headquarters in the old U.S. Embassy compound in Tehran, allegedly met with Shiite militias in July, calling on them to "continue liquidating all enemies of the Islamic revolution, including security and intelligence personnel, tribal chiefs, and religious clerics," Treasury said.

It also named Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani and Ismail Hafez al-Lami, both alleged to be leaders of Shiite extremist groups based in Iran. Sheibani's network includes hundreds of members in several pro-Iranian insurgent groups in southern Iraq that have conducted roadside bomb attacks against Americans and sabotaged British forces operating in the south, Treasury said.

Lami, known as Abu Dura, leads another pro-Iranian group that has targeted Iraqi officials, Sunni leaders and others, Treasury said. His group kidnapped, tortured and killed Sunnis in Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education in 2006.

The administration also sanctioned Mish'an al-Jaburi, a former member of Iraq's parliament who fled to Syria after allegedly embezzling government funds and supports Iraqi insurgents, Treasury said. He owns al-Zawra, a television station critical of the U.S. military presence in Iraq that has reportedly aired recruitment videos for al-Qaeda of Iraq. Treasury included al-Zawra in the sanctions order.

Fox News Channel
January 9, 2008

16. President Bush On Strait Of Hormuz Incident

By Catherine Herridge
Special Report With Brit Hume, 6:00 PM

BRET BAIER: Iran claims the U.S. Navy video of a disturbing encounter between U.S. warships and Iranian fast-boats Sunday is a fake. But President Bush, traveling in the Mideast, has given Iran a strongly-worded piece of advice: Do not attack American ships or there will be a price to pay. National correspondent Catherine Herridge reports.

CATHERINE HERRIDGE: In another sign that the controversy is intensifying, the president warned Iran at the first news conference of his Mideast trip not to target U.S. vessels. It is the president's bluntest warning to date.

PRES. GEORGE W. BUSH: There will be serious consequences if they attack our ships -- pure and simple. And my advice to them is don't do it.

HERRIDGE: Iranian television, quoting a senior commander with Iran's Revolutionary Guard, claimed the tape, first released by the U.S. Navy late Tuesday, was a fabrication, a lie, a fake meant to damage Iran's credibility. The taping running about four-and-a-half minutes in length shows five Iranian fast-boats swarming and threatening three U.S. warships in the straight of Hormuz, one of the world's main shipping corridors for crude oil. The reaction from U.S. officials to Iran's claim of fabrication was swift and dismissive.

SEAN MCCORMACK [State Department Spokesman]: That's just ridiculous. I completely dismiss that.

HERRIDGE: Early today

the Navy released a second version of the tape, one where the audio was enhanced. The exchange between U.S. sailors and an Iranian is easily discernible. In this section it begins with a direct threat.

IRANIAN MALE: I am coming to you.

U.S. SAILOR: Inbound small craft, you are approaching a coalition warship operating in international waters. Your identity is not known, your intentions are unclear. You are straying into danger and may be subject to defensive measures. Request you establish communications now or alter your course immediately to remain clear. Request you alter course immediately to remain clear."

IRANIAN MALE: You will explode after two minutes.

HERRIDGE: And the risk is real, according to analysts who point to the U.S.S. Cole, an attack in October, 2000, which left 17 dead after a small vessel packed with explosives rammmed the ship's side.

LT. GEN. THOMAS MCINERNEY (Ret.) [Fox News Military Analyst]: Fire boats like that could have attacked those three surface vessels and they could have probably killed over 100 American sailors, and perhaps even sunk them.

HERRIDGE: Speaking in Baltimore, the Navy's secretary defended the actions of the sailors who did not engage the fast-boats despite the provocation.

DONALD WINTER [Navy Secretary]: I think that they accorded themselves exactly the way we would like them to.

HERRIDGE: Separately, Navy officials tell Fox that dealing with Iran's Revolutionary Guard is especially difficult because they're so unpredictable and not a disciplined military force.

At the Pentagon, Catherine Herridge, Fox News.

Washington Post
January 10, 2008
Pg. 17

17. Taliban Commander Emerges As Pakistan's 'Biggest Problem'

Radical Accused in Bhutto's Death Has Quickly Gathered Power

By Imtiaz Ali and Craig Whitlock, Washington Post Foreign Service

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, Jan. 9 -- Even as his reputation has grown more menacing and his militia more powerful, the Taliban commander accused of ordering the death of Benazir Bhutto has shrouded himself in mystery.

When Baitullah Mehsud attended a February 2005 signing ceremony for an ill-fated cease-fire with the Pakistani government, he bundled his face and upper body in a black cloth before appearing in public to scrawl his signature. Like the man to whom he has sworn allegiance, Afghan Taliban leader Mohammad Omar, Mehsud has obsessively avoided cameras and maintained an ascetic lifestyle.

Since then, Mehsud has emerged as perhaps the greatest military threat to the Pakistani government. Last August, just weeks after the cease-fire ended in recriminations, his fighters from South Waziristan stunned the country by capturing a group of more than 200 soldiers who were patrolling the lawless tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan. Three were executed; the rest were freed in a prisoner swap.

In recent days, Pakistani officials have blamed the Taliban commander for the death of Bhutto, the former prime minister who was killed Dec. 27 while campaigning to return to power. Investigations are ongoing, and it remains to be seen whether Mehsud was directly responsible.

What is clear, however, is that Pakistan's past efforts to control or neutralize Mehsud

have repeatedly backfired, leaving him stronger than ever and adding to the general instability that is plaguing the country, Pakistani officials and analysts said in interviews.

"Baitullah Mehsud is the biggest problem of today's Pakistan, and he is the main factor behind the failure of the government's current policies in the tribal region," a senior government official said on condition of anonymity in Peshawar, a frontier city near the Afghan border. "Kidnap after kidnap of the security forces by his militants has become a routine matter now and a big embarrassment for the government."

Mehsud, 34, is also accused by Afghan and U.S. officials of organizing suicide attacks in Afghanistan and helping to supply Taliban fighters there. But the Pakistani military, distracted by political problems, has been reluctant to mount a direct assault on his refuge in South Waziristan, a rugged tribal area that has successfully resisted outside control for centuries.

"There's really no choice for the government now," said Muhammed Amir Rana, director of the Pak Institute for Peace Studies in Islamabad. "They'll have to go in and do a military operation to weaken him. He's become too strong. They need to do something to stop the Taliban and the Talibanization of that region."

Analysts and officials said there are other Taliban commanders who control more territory or bigger forces than Mehsud. But they said his political influence within the notoriously fractious movement has grown rapidly and is probably unparalleled on the Pakistani side of the border.

Last month, for instance, Mehsud was chosen to serve as the head of a 40-member shura, or consultative council, that was formed to coordinate various Taliban factions in Pakistan.

Mehsud is also a favorite commander of Taliban leaders

in Afghanistan, including Omar, the one-eyed cleric who has led the movement for a decade, and Jalaluddin Haqqani, a grizzled insurgent leader who has organized attacks against Soviet, U.S. and NATO troops there since the 1980s.

"There are a couple of other local Taliban commanders who have been influential in their own localities, but Baitullah has overshadowed them all lately and now his name carries the day when it comes to militancy in Pakistan," said Ashraf Ali, a researcher at Peshawar University and specialist on the Taliban.

Mehsud was an unknown figure outside the movement until late 2004, when he rose in the ranks after the death of another Pakistani Taliban commander, Nek Mohammed, who was killed in a U.S. cross-border airstrike in South Waziristan.

In the internal power struggle that followed, Mehsud at first was overshadowed by a fellow clansman, Abdullah Mehsud, a former inmate at the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, who was released in 2004 and returned to Pakistan only to take up arms again.

A one-legged daredevil with a taste for publicity, Abdullah Mehsud ordered the kidnapping of two Chinese engineers in South Waziristan in 2004 and was soon named one of Pakistan's most wanted men. But he fell out of favor with Omar and other Taliban elders, who saw him as a loose cannon and decided to replace him, analysts said.

Abdullah Mehsud was killed in a raid by Pakistani security forces in July.

Pakistani leaders thought they had successfully brought Baitullah Mehsud under their control when they persuaded him and several other militant leaders from South Waziristan to sign the cease-fire in February 2005.

Under the deal, the

Pakistani army withdrew its forces from the area in exchange for a pledge by the militants to stop launching attacks against U.S., Afghan and coalition forces across the border, as well as a promise to refuse shelter to al-Qaeda members and other foreign fighters.

At the time, there were widespread reports that the Pakistani government gave bags of cash to Mehsud and other tribal leaders as a sweetener. Officials have denied it.

Regardless, Mehsud and his faction quickly broke their promises to keep the peace and allowed al-Qaeda leaders to resettle in the area, U.S. officials said. After pressure from U.S. and Afghan officials, Pakistani leaders admitted the peace accord had failed. The cease-fire collapsed last summer, along with a similar deal in North Waziristan.

Analysts said that the nonaggression pact enabled Mehsud to consolidate his power and that his forces are now stronger and better financed than before. They also said he has expanded his sphere of influence from South Waziristan to other tribal areas along the border.

"A bigger portion of South Waziristan now seems like a state within the state, and Baitullah Mehsud is running this like a head of government," said Silab Mehsud, a tribal journalist from the Mehsud clan and the author of a book on the history and culture of the region. "Now he's an all-powerful man whose writ and command is visible across the tribal belt."

Whitlock reported from Berlin.

Boston Globe
January 10, 2008

18. Pakistan Rejects UN Concerns, Contends Nuclear Arsenal Is Secure

By Zeeshan Haider, Reuters

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan rejected yesterday remarks by the UN nuclear watchdog chief that the nation's nuclear arsenal could fall into the hands of Islamist militants, and allayed the fears of a US senator visiting Islamabad.

Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, expressed his fears about Pakistan's nuclear weapons in an interview with the pan-Arab daily Al-Hayat.

His comments were widely reported in Pakistani newspapers yesterday and echo concerns raised by some US nuclear specialists and politicians concerned about the militant violence and political turmoil that is rocking the government of President Pervez Musharraf.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry dismissed ElBaradei's remarks as "unwarranted and irresponsible."

"Pakistan rejects the statement by Dr. ElBaradei," Mohammad Sadiq, Foreign Ministry spokesman, said during a news briefing.

US Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, Independent Democrat of Connecticut, visiting Islamabad, said he had been briefed by Khalid Kidwai, a retired general heading up the Strategic Plans Division, and came away convinced that the nuclear arsenal was secure. The senator chairs the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Pakistan is a key ally in the US-led campaign against terrorism, but deteriorating security in the country, particularly after last month's assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, has raised international concern about the safety of the nation's nuclear weapons.

"I fear that chaos ... or an extremist regime could take root in that country, which has 30 to 40 warheads," ElBaradei was quoted as saying in the interview. Other estimates have put the number of warheads at

60.

Despite concerns, especially since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, US military and defense officials say the weapons are safely under Pakistani control.

Sadiq said a three-member US Congressional delegation visiting Pakistan this week had met with officials of the military-led Strategic Plans Division, which has oversight for Pakistan's nuclear weapons. He gave no details.

The security of Pakistan's nuclear program has become a focus of greater international concern after A.Q. Khan, the head of the program, confessed on national television in 2004 to selling nuclear know-how to Iran and Libya.

Washington Times
January 10, 2008
Pg. 11

19. Beijing Would Use Force To Restore N. Korea Stability

Report calls refugees a concern

By Steve Hirsch, Washington Times

China would send troops into North Korea if it thought that was necessary to stem a refugee flood because of instability in its hard-line communist neighbor, a report by two Washington think tanks finds.

Beijing would prefer to receive authorization from, and coordinate with, the United Nations in such a case, but would take the initiative to restore stability if necessary, says the paper, issued by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the U.S. Institute of Peace.

"Contingency plans are in place" for the People's Liberation Army to perform humanitarian missions and peacekeeping, or "order-keeping," missions, the report says.

It says plans are also in place for the army to perform "environmental control

missions" to clean up nuclear contamination caused by a strike on nuclear facilities near the Chinese border, and to "secure 'loose nukes' and fissile material."

One of the report's authors, John S. Park of the U.S. Institute of Peace, said yesterday that the report's findings were based on discussions held in China in June and on participants' responses to suggested scenarios.

The report, "Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea," cites an "apparent new willingness" among Chinese analysts and PLA researchers to talk about the danger of North Korean instability and how China might respond if its security is threatened.

Some, but not all, Chinese analysts "say explicitly that they favor holding a discussion on stability in North Korea in official channels with the United States, including possible joint responses in support of common objectives, such as securing nuclear weapons and fissile material," the report says.

The report is based on discussions with North Korea specialists in China and covers topics including economic trends in North Korea, Sino-North Korean economic relations and North Korean political stability.

Among the report's other findings were that China saw North Korea's explosion of a nuclear device in 2006 as an act of defiance toward China as well as the international community at large. Beijing thinks it must now use pressure as well as inducement in response to North Korea's nuclear efforts.

The report says Chinese analysts are debating whether North Korea will fulfill its promise to give up its nuclear weapons, and whether a treaty between the two countries should be revised or abandoned. They also are

weighing the strategic value of North Korea to China.

Chinese analysts also are debating the likelihood of a rapid thaw in U.S. relations with Pyongyang and how that would affect Chinese interests, the study says.

In other areas, the report says Chinese analysts are less concerned about North Korea's immediate economic prospects than they were a year ago, "reporting severe but stable conditions."

Chinese specialists widely think the North Korean system will remain stable for the next few years barring the sudden death of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il or "external interference aimed at destabilizing the regime."

Washington Post
January 10, 2008
Pg. 6

20. Army Officer Is Cleared In Abu Ghraib Scandal

By Josh White, Washington Post Staff Writer

The only Army officer charged with a crime as a result of the abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq has been cleared of all criminal responsibility in the case after a general this week dismissed the one conviction against him and wiped away the sentence.

Lt. Col. Steven L. Jordan was convicted last year on one charge of disobeying an order when a jury found that he spoke to others about the Abu Ghraib investigation after he was ordered not to do so. Though Jordan was exonerated at trial of any connection to the abuse of Iraqi detainees in 2003, he was issued a criminal reprimand for his failure to obey Maj. Gen. George Fay, who led the most significant investigation into the abuses after they were discovered.

Maj. Gen. Richard J. Rowe, commanding general of the Military District of Washington, wrote a short letter to Jordan's attorney on

Tuesday night explaining that the criminal charge would be dismissed. "The finding of guilty and the sentence are disapproved," Rowe wrote. "The charges are dismissed."

Col. James Yonts, a spokesman for the Military District of Washington, said last night that Rowe has issued Jordan an administrative reprimand that clears Jordan of criminal responsibility but still questions his decision to disobey Fay's order. Rowe's action means that Jordan will have no record of a criminal conviction and will continue to serve as an active-duty officer at Fort Belvoir until his retirement.

"In light of the offense Lt. Col. Jordan has been found guilty of committing, and the substantial evidence in mitigation presented at the trial and in post-trial matters submitted by defense counsel, Maj. Gen. Rowe determined that an administrative reprimand was a fair and appropriate disposition of the matter," Yonts said last night.

In a memo submitted to Rowe on Saturday, Jordan's attorney wrote that a federal criminal conviction would be "unjust" and urged Rowe to reduce it to an administrative punishment.

"It was a long struggle, but in the end he was vindicated," said Maj. Kris Poppe, one of Jordan's attorneys. "In the end, there was a recognition that this was a superb officer and leader and he did the best he could under the circumstances he was in and didn't commit any crimes."

Jordan said yesterday that the Army "finally got it right" and that this will let him "move back on with my life."

"I'm still a little bit shocked by it all, but I'm gratified and glad that General Rowe saw it for what it really is," Jordan said. "I don't know if any officer needed to be held accountable, but I obviously don't believe it should have been me."

At one time, Jordan faced

a potential sentence of 16 1/2 years in prison amid allegations of detainee abuse and failing to properly supervise soldiers who committed abuse. Early in the Abu Ghraib investigation, Jordan was identified by the military as a potentially major player in the case, but prosecutors were unable to link him to any of the photographs of abuse that depicted detainees in hoods, shackled in painful positions and stacked naked in human pyramids.

Jordan and his attorneys have long maintained his innocence and said that he was neither involved with aggressive interrogation policies, nor did he supervise the handful of low-ranking soldiers who have been convicted. Prosecutors had long suggested that the case be concluded as an administrative matter, but senior commanders ignored that advice and pushed ahead with a public court-martial.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch
January 9, 2008
Pg. 3

21. Army Medic Unafraid To Say That He's Gay

Iraq war veteran hasn't been punished, but he could still be investigated.

By Suzanne Gamboa, Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- Even if no one is asking, Army Sgt. Darren Manzella has been telling anyone who'll listen that he's gay - without serious retribution so far from the military.

Manzella, a medic who served in Iraq and Kuwait, has admitted his sexual orientation in national media interviews and again on Tuesday in a Washington news conference.

"This is who I am. This is my life," said Manzella, who received a combat medical badge for his service in Iraq. "It has never affected my job performance before. I don't think it will make a difference

now. And to be honest since then, I don't see a difference because of my homosexuality."

Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said Manzella's case demonstrates the military is arbitrarily enforcing its "don't ask, don't tell" policy now that the country is at war.

The "don't ask, don't tell" policy prohibits active-duty service members from openly acknowledging whether they are gay or lesbian.

Manzella still could be investigated now that he has left the battlefield. Every time he has said he is gay publicly can be counted as a violation of the policy, one of his attorneys said.

Manzella first told a military supervisor about his sexual orientation in August 2006 while he was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, and working in division headquarters. Three weeks after making the revelation, his battalion commander told him an investigation had been closed without finding "proof of homosexuality."

A month later, Manzella was redeployed for the war in Iraq.

Paul Boyce Jr., an Army spokesman, said he was unaware of an investigation of Manzella being opened or closed. He said the investigation would have been done by Manzella's Fort Hood unit, and officials there are on leave and unavailable to discuss the case.

"This particular soldier's unit only recently returned from the war to Fort Hood, Texas, so it's premature to speculate on any future actions until the young man's situation can be considered by his chain of command," Boyce said in a statement.

Manzella, originally from Portland, N.Y., returned from the Middle East last month and went on leave shortly before Christmas. He will return to the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood at the end of the month.

A bill to eliminate the military's sexual orientation policy, filed by Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., is pending in Congress.

Colorado Springs Gazette
January 10, 2008

Pg. 3

22. Carson: Alleged Attacks Reported

Officials in Iraq were told of GI's claims, post says, but proof of shootings won't be easy

By Dennis Huspeni, The Gazette

Fort Carson officials confirmed they "immediately" notified military officials in Iraq about allegations of soldiers shooting at Iraqi civilians, but specifics about that investigation were scarce Wednesday.

Military law experts, however, said any criminal investigation in a war zone months after a crime would be especially difficult.

The allegations surfaced in an El Paso County homicide case involving soldiers accused of killing fellow soldiers in Colorado Springs and allegedly committing a wave of violent crimes here in recent months.

"It may be tough," said Eugene Fidell, a Washington D.C.-based military-law attorney and military-justice professor. "The trail may have grown cold. But this is the type of thing that has always challenged military investigative organizations."

Pfc. Bruce Bastien Jr. and former soldier Louis Edward Bressler are charged with first-degree murder in the shooting deaths of Spc. Kevin Shields on Dec. 1 and Pfc. Robert James on Aug. 4. Another former soldier, Kenneth Eastridge, also is charged in Shields' death.

After Bastien was arrested in connection with the Colorado Springs homicides, he told a U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command agent that Eastridge would often shoot at Iraqi civilians while

the pair patrolled the streets of Baghdad.

"Bastien said that he knows that an Iraqi civilian was struck on at least one occasion," according to a motion filed Tuesday by prosecutors in the Shields homicide.

The men used stolen AK-47 rifles commonly used by insurgents so that if the shootings were questioned, they could "claim they were taking on hostile fire," Bastien told the investigator.

A Fort Carson spokeswoman called the allegations "very serious" and said they were reported immediately.

"In accordance with DOD (U.S. Department of Defense) directives, the allegations were reported immediately through Forces Command and Central Command to officials at Multi National Forces —Iraq," spokeswoman Dee Mc-Nutt said in a written statement late Tuesday.

A spokesman for the Criminal Investigation Command confirmed the investigation Wednesday, but declined to answer questions about its scope or progress.

A local military-law expert and attorney, Michael Duncan, said investigators would likely start with others soldiers in the unit.

"That's a standard investigative tactic — get people to talk," Duncan said. "Every time they get a lead, they might talk to others and build a case that way."

The suspects served in Iraq together in the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division and all were in the same company, according to Fort Carson records.

Duncan, a former Army attorney, said a tool used for leverage in such questioning is that if any soldiers witnessed such a shooting, they were required to report it.

"That's one of the ways CID gets people to talk," he said.

Either way, proving such

allegations is a monumental task, Fidell said.

"It's not like investigating a shooting downtown. It's a war zone where even on a good day it's difficult to investigate a charge of criminal conduct," Fidell said. "The problems of proof are severe."

The suspects are being held without bond at the El Paso County Criminal Justice Center and are due back in court Jan. 25.

Portland (ME) Press-Herald
January 9, 2008

23. Chief Naval Officer Visits Shipyards

Adm. Gary Roughead says negotiations are ongoing on the contract for BIW to build the first DDG 1000.

By Matt Wickenheiser, Staff Writer

BATH — The Navy's top military officer visited Bath Iron Works and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery on Tuesday, the start of a coast-to-coast tour of shipyards that work on naval vessels.

Adm. Gary Roughead, the chief of naval operations, started the day in Kittery, then toured BIW with Maine Republican Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe. Roughead ended the day speaking to personnel at the Brunswick Naval Air Station before boarding his plane and leaving the state. Roughead will visit yards in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Wisconsin and California in the near future.

In a short interview, Roughead touched on his plans for the size of the Navy as well as the status of the DDG 1000 destroyer and Littoral Combat Ship programs. BIW is one of two shipyards working on the DDG 1000, the next-generation of destroyer, and is also the lead contractor on one of two teams on the LCS program.

Asked when the Navy might award a construction contract to actually build the first DDG 1000, Roughead declined to comment beyond

saying the contract was in negotiations.

"It will be negotiated out; I don't want to speculate on when that will happen," he said.

BIW has already been given the lead in building the first DDG 1000 with a September decision that it would get the equipment to be installed in the first ship, rather than the technology going to Northrop Grumman Ship Systems in Mississippi.

That helped alleviate a projected gap in work between the construction of the last Arleigh Burke-class destroyer and the first DDG 1000, but any slip in the work schedule could cause problems. The sooner a construction contract is awarded, the better chance work will be stable.

During a short interview after the BIW tour, Collins said Roughead "recognized the importance of that skilled work force and the need to maintain that work force."

Roughead said he sees a Navy of at least 313 ships -- compared to the current 280 -- but believes that number is a minimum. Having commanded both the Pacific and Atlantic fleets, Roughead said he believed even a 313-ship Navy "will not be enough for the mission we're going to be tasked with in coming years."

The Littoral Combat Ship fleet would be an "extremely important" part of that Navy, said Roughead. The LCS program has been under fire for cost overruns in the past year. Two shipbuilding teams, one led by BIW at the Austal USA shipyard in Mobile, Ala., are working on a lead ship in the new class, designed to operate in coastal waters.

But in 2007, the Navy canceled contracts for each team to build a second ship due to concerns about cost overruns. Both teams' ships have seen cost overruns of 50 percent to 75 percent, according to the Navy.

Roughead said the Navy, shipyards and suppliers need to

contain costs on naval programs, including LCS and the DDG 1000, which are estimated to cost \$3.3 billion per ship.

"It's important that we ... define what we need," said Roughead. "Not really want, but need."

The Navy hopes to have seven DDG 1000 destroyers as part of the fleet, and 55 Littoral Combat Ships. As an open-ocean Navy, the U.S. hasn't paid much attention to coastal vessels, he said, but that changes with the LCS. Roughead said he also believes the LCS is "an attractive ship to other countries," as well.

Snowe and Collins said they were pleased with Roughead's tour, and that it was clear the admiral was impressed with the efficiencies at BIW.

In the battle for more shipbuilding dollars, it's important for the delegation to work with top naval leadership, said Snowe.

"If we're on the same page, it's very beneficial," she said.

USA Today
January 10, 2008
Pg. 5

24. Most F-15 Jets Coming Back To Service

The majority of Air Force F-15 fighter jets are returning to flight after being grounded for two months over possible structural flaws.

About 160 of the jets have been found to have defects and will remain grounded indefinitely after an investigation into why one broke apart in midair and crashed Nov. 2 in Missouri.

"The priority in resuming operations for a portion of the F-15 fleet is the defense of our nation — America deserves nothing less," said Gen. John Corley, head of the Air Combat Command.

The Air Force grounded all of its F-15s — nearly 700 — after the catastrophic failure

of an F-15C during a routine training flight in Missouri. A few hundred — the newer F-15E models being used in Iraq and Afghanistan — returned to service shortly afterward.

CNN
January 9, 2008

25. F-15 Break-Up Animation Released

By Jamie McIntyre

The Situation Room (CNN), 5:00 PM

BLITZER: We're just now getting in some exclusive Pentagon animation showing the break-up of an F-15 fighter jet that prompted the U.S. Air Force to ground its entire fleet.

Let's go to our senior Pentagon correspondent, Jamie McIntyre.

He's watching this story for us.

What are we learning from this exclusive animation -- Jamie.

JAMIE MCINTYRE, CNN SENIOR PENTAGON CORRESPONDENT: Well, Wolf, as you recall, this was the accident back in November that resulted in the grounding of the entire fleet of older F-15s. And CNN has obtained exclusively the official U.S. Air Force investigation's recreation of what happened that day.

Major Stephen Stillwell, a Missouri Air Guard pilot, was flying his F-15, attempting an 8G turn at 500 miles an hour when there was a major structural failure in something called the longeron. And, as you can see, the plane literally broke in half.

His wing men radioed him, urging him to eject while there was still time.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Eject. Eject. Eject. Knock it off. Knock it off.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: MIG 3, copy. Knock it off.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: MIG 3, knock it off.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: 34, safe enough. Climb high.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MCINTYRE: Now Major Stillwell -- even though his plane broke apart around him -- was able to get out. He did recover. He did smash his shoulder in the accident and is still recovering from that.

Meanwhile, the Air Force has now inspected all of the planes and announced just today that 60 percent of the older fleet -- about 280 planes -- will be returned to service. They say they are absolutely confident that what happened to this plane won't happen to those. But there's still 40 percent of the fleet that have some suspect problems that are keeping them on the ground -- Wolf.

BLITZER: That pilot is oh so lucky to be alive, Jamie.

What an amazing animation. Very, very dramatic stuff.

All right, thank God he's OK.

Jamie McIntyre at the Pentagon for us.

New York Times
January 10, 2008

26. 4 Say Marines Took Fire In Attack By Afghans

By Paul von Zielbauer

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. — Marines from an elite combat unit who American military commanders said killed 19 Afghan civilians last year after a suicide bomb attack withstood hostile gunfire immediately after the explosion, witnesses testified on Wednesday.

The witnesses in a Marine Corps inquiry, three Marine sergeants and an Afghan interpreter riding in an American convoy near Jalalabad last March, offered the first public description of the unit's reaction immediately after the bomb attack near one of their vehicles.

They suggested that Marine gunners fired methodically and only in response to incoming weapons

fire and the approach of cars they perceived as threats.

No marines have been charged with a crime in the episode.

The inquiry here is examining the conduct of the two senior officers present on the convoy: Maj. Fred C. Galvin and Capt. Vincent J. Noble. Neither officer fired his weapon during the episode.

Each of the four witnesses was sitting in the first two Humvees in a six-vehicle convoy. They testified that as the smoke from the blast cleared, turret gunners in the first and second vehicles began firing their mounted machine guns to either side of the road, all four witnesses said.

They each described hearing intermittent AK-47 fire, though none of the witnesses saw where it was coming from or who was shooting.

In the two minutes that elapsed before the convoy began moving west toward the American base in Jalalabad, Sgt. Joshua Henderson, the turret gunner in the second Humvee, fired about 200 rounds to either side of the road, Sgt. Brett Hayes testified Wednesday.

At the same time, the gunner in the first Humvee, Sgt. Peter Brooks, fired his mounted machine gun toward the left and right, testified Sgt. Jason Roberts, the driver, and Sgt. Benjamin Baker, the front passenger.

Three witnesses described how Sergeant Brooks, as the lead vehicle's gunner, fired careful warning shots into the pavement to halt at least two Afghan cars that approached after the suicide bomb attack — shots that they said did not appear to injure the vehicles' occupants.

Washington Post
January 10, 2008

Pg. 2

27. Marine Is Arraigned In The Killings Of 24

Iraqis

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. -- A Marine Corps squad leader was arraigned on voluntary-manslaughter and other charges involving the 2005 killings of 24 Iraqi men, women and children. Staff Sgt. Frank Wuterich, 27, reserved the rights to enter a plea later and to have a judge or jury decide the case against him, which is the biggest U.S. criminal prosecution involving civilian deaths in the Iraq war. The judge, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Meeks, set a Feb. 25 trial date.

Los Angeles Times
January 10, 2008

28. For Marines, Iraq Becomes A Family Affair

Repeated deployments prompt Camp Pendleton to bolster support programs for loved ones left behind. Reenlistments remain high.

By Tony Perry, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

CAMP PENDLETON —The general who soon will lead 25,000 Marines in Iraq said Wednesday that "the experts" were wrong when they predicted that repeated deployments would strain military families to the breaking point.

Reenlistments among Marines remain high, which would not be the case if families objected, Maj. Gen. John Kelly told several hundred Marines who are set to deploy soon to Anbar province, west of Baghdad.

"The old adage says you enlist the Marine but you reenlist the wife and family," said Kelly, whose two sons are Marines who have served in Iraq.

Many Marine families have weathered two, three, even four deployments, and Marine officials say they are well aware of the stresses on them.

To help bolster families, the Marine Corps has allocated an additional \$30 million to

Camp Pendleton and other bases for family readiness programs that include support groups and counseling.

Some 70% of Marines in their first enlistment are unmarried, so one goal is to offer support for parents as well as spouses. Money also will go to hire full-time staff members dedicated to keeping family members constantly informed while troops are away.

On the eve of this current deployment, the Marines say they have stepped up efforts to spot post-traumatic stress disorder in Iraq. The aim is to identify problems before they disrupt Marines' family lives and marriages.

The Corps also is working to get accurate information out more quickly to families when Marines are wounded or get sick in Iraq, and is in the process of setting up a 24-hour hotline.

Kelly soon will go to Iraq to take command of Marines as the Camp Pendleton-based 1st Marine Expeditionary Force relieves the Camp Lejeune, N.C.-based 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force and assumes responsibility in Anbar province.

Since 2004, the Marines have been assigned to the sprawling region, which was home to the Sunni insurgency. Once considered the most violent spot in Iraq, Anbar is now seen by U.S. officials as an example of how the local populace can be turned against the insurgency.

Kelly, a tall, scholarly officer who began his Marine career in the enlisted ranks, helped lead the assault on Baghdad in 2003 and then led a strike force to Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's ancestral home.

In spring 2004, as assistant commander of the 1st Marine Division, he was a leader in the first battle against insurgents in Fallouja.

Anbar "is still a very, very dangerous place," Kelly said during a brief ceremony to mark the approaching

deployment. "The war is not yet won, but we are winning it."

The toll on Camp Pendleton has been significant.

Until the Army "surge" in Baghdad greatly increased Army fatalities, Camp Pendleton had had more personnel killed in Iraq than any other U.S. military base.

An academic study in 2006 found that the troop most likely to be killed in Iraq is a Marine lance corporal -- probably from Camp Pendleton.

Infantry troops often say they have adjusted to the "seven and seven" rotation -- seven months in Iraq, seven months at home, then back to Iraq.

"You get used to it," Sgt. Juan Mendez, 26, said last week as he prepared to board a bus for March Air Reserve Base in Riverside County to the plane that would take him to Iraq.

But families sometimes are less stoic. "It's hard," said Mendez's father, Jose, a machinist from Los Angeles. "It wasn't supposed to happen again, but here we are."

Lori Bentley of San Clemente, mother of Sgt. Jared Bentley, 23, said she had a formula for surviving the stress: "prayer."

The sergeant's girlfriend, Jamie Borden, 24, said her approach was to "turn the ringer on your phone up real high and wait for those middle-of-the-night phone calls."

Some troops will deploy for a year with a two-week break during the deployment.

Although the deployment of Marines from the 1st and 5th regiments is seen as a return of local troops to Iraq, Camp Pendleton has had a continued presence there.

Even though the leadership of the Marine effort in the last year has been from Camp Lejeune, many of the troops were from Camp Pendleton and Twentynine Palms, Calif. The reverse will

also be true under Kelly and his stateside boss, Lt. Gen. Samuel Helland, who will command troops from bases other than Camp Pendleton.

Homemade signs affixed to fences along major thoroughfares at Camp Pendleton testify to the constant movement of troops to and from Iraq. Some welcome troops home. Others wish them well in their deployment.

A bumper sticker on many vehicles driven by Marine spouses says "Half of My Heart Is in Iraq." A T-shirt sold to spouses reads "Marine Wife: The Toughest Job in the Corps."

The main mission of the Marines in Anbar province is to train Iraqi security forces and support the fledgling provincial government in Ramadi until both are able to stand alone without U.S. help.

Kelly said he spoke to another group of Marine enlisted personnel before the afternoon ceremony.

"My message to them [was] 'We want to work ourselves out of a job,' " he said.

New York Times
January 10, 2008

29. Oo-Rah! A Squad Of Actors Takes Lanford Wilson To The Marines

By Campbell Robertson

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — Adam Driver, former Marine lance corporal, First Battalion, First Marine Regiment, Weapons Company, 81st Platoon, remembers two shows he saw while stationed here on this sprawling base north of San Diego. There was a skateboarder who performed tricks. And a performance by the San Diego Chargers cheerleaders.

As entertainment for grown men, it was — well, here's how Mr. Driver put it: "I mean, how dumb do they think we are?"

Which is why Mr. Driver, current third-year drama

student at the Juilliard School, was here this week with a jazz trio and five actors for an evening of music and monologues by contemporary playwrights like Lanford Wilson, John Patrick Shanley and Jane Martin. He is hoping to prove to reluctant officials that serious theater — viewed by some in the military, Mr. Driver said, as “sissies running around stage in tights” — would not only work at Camp Pendleton but also be excellent for troops in war zones, where the entertainment options are much scarcer.

Which is why this 24-year-old student in one of the most intensive acting programs in the country has struggled, largely on his own, to pull together successful Juilliard alums like Laura Linney, Tracie Thoms and David Denman to put on something completely out of the ordinary at Camp Pendleton.

On a bare stage under the Marine Corps insignia, the five actors, some of whom had never been on a base before (Ms. Linney said she had been expecting something more like “F Troop”), were sitting in folding chairs before an audience of around 100, composed of reluctant men on dates; older couples; a handful of brawny men with shaved heads, some of whom had been actors or musicians in high school; and others who were not quite sure what this Juilliard was. They were scattered around the front rows of the otherwise yawningly empty auditorium built to accommodate 1,500. (The event’s competition happened to be the college football championship game on television.)

This was, as several audience members said beforehand, an opportunity for some culture. After a little jazz, the show began with Mr. Driver putting a baseball cap on his head backward and delivering a hilarious, profanity-laced lament by a

would-be rapper from a play by Danny Hoch. The Juilliard staff member who was accompanying the show laughed conspicuously, as if to give permission.

“This is the first time I’ve seen something like this” on the base, said Sgt. David Ells, who arrived at the theater in a camouflage uniform.

Mr. Driver, tall, sinewy and seriously driven, was visibly nervous before the audience began trickling into the Marine Corps Base Training Center, as the theater is called, a space reserved for training exercises and movies but not, at least recently, straight plays for adults.

But it was here at Camp Pendleton a few years earlier, when a potentially fatal miscommunication at the mortar range inspired a moment of self-reflection, that Mr. Driver decided he was going to become an actor.

He had applied to Juilliard before he enlisted but not out of any serious ambition. He was desperate to get out of his hometown, Mishawaka, Ind., and he had acted in a couple of plays in school. But mainly he liked that Juilliard did not check grades.

When Juilliard rejected his application, he turned to the Marines, training as a mortar man and set on going to Iraq or Afghanistan. “Otherwise,” he said, “it’s all a waste of time.” But while mountain biking one afternoon, he broke his sternum.

Mr. Driver insisted he was fit for deployment, loading up on painkillers and working out strenuously to prove it. But the doctors disagreed, and he was honorably discharged in 2004.

After a year at the University of Indianapolis, Mr. Driver applied to Juilliard again and was accepted. The transition was not easy.

“I’m going from the Marine Corps,” he said, “to being a penguin and getting in touch with my feelings.”

Later his friends in the Marines kidded him for the

tights wearing, and made him do his penguin bit over beers. The Juilliard students, said Gabriel Ebert, a classmate and a participant in the Camp Pendleton production, were intimidated at times by Mr. Driver’s intense personality. Mr. Driver said he frequently considered dropping out and joining the fire department.

But in some ways, in their rigor and discipline, the Marine Corps and Juilliard were oddly similar.

Mr. Driver continues to do 1,000 push-ups on most mornings, he still calls practically everyone ‘Sir,’ and he remains set on going overseas.

Originally his plan was to take a production of Sam Shepard’s “True West” to the troops stationed in the Middle East, but on the advice of James Houghton, the director of the drama program at Juilliard, Mr. Driver scaled it down. He came up with a series of monologues that showcased “manly characters” that marines might not associate with theater.

A passage from David Mamet was included and several from Mr. Shanley, a former marine. The monologue by Mr. Hoch was added, as well as a speech by Mr. Wilson. After a round of letter writing, Mr. Driver piqued the interest of actors like Dianne Wiest and Kevin Spacey.

But the USO passed. In an interview Bernie Rone, the director of celebrity entertainment recruiting at the USO, said his main concern was that the project did not involve enough high-profile names for the military to be interested.

“They have to be celebrities, acts that the troops are requesting,” Mr. Rone said, mentioning recent appearances by the country singer Toby Keith and the actor Wilmer Valderrama.

Mr. Driver said he was told the USO simply did not think theater would work, an objection echoed by Mark

Phillips, a spokesman for the organization. “Look at the demographics of American service members,” Mr. Phillips said. “You’re talking 18 to 24 years old, predominantly male. If you look at what it is they’re interested in, in terms of entertainment, that’s what we’re focusing on.”

Mr. Rone suggested that Mr. Driver look up Armed Forces Entertainment, a government agency that books acts for the military. But Mr. Driver wanted the USO stamp of approval.

After a year of back and forth Mr. Driver finally decided to bypass the USO, and in October he called Camp Pendleton. Officials there accepted the production, despite voicing some of the same skepticism that USO officials did.

“If someone was a singer from the Met Opera, it might not find an audience here, if you know what I mean,” said Pete Elkin, who is in charge of activities and entertainment on the base. He cited Justin Timberlake and Brooks & Dunn as the kind of acts that would draw big audiences. But, Mr. Elkin said, “base leadership thought it would be an honor.”

Mr. Driver had to edit the pieces for vulgarity reasons; the Mamet speech had to go altogether. But much of the profanity, sexuality and aggression were left in, and the marquee at the theater read: “Juilliard Performance. Adults Only.”

“I was shocked when I read this,” said Ms. Linney, referring to the frank sexuality in her monologues. “That’s maybe coming from my own ignorance about who these people are.” The whole event, which was financed by Juilliard, was in some ways a serious culture shock for the actors, she said.

Mr. Driver, in his opening remarks, raised the objections that he had heard, the idea that “Marines don’t fit the demographic of a theater

audience," and said, "This performance is meant to prove otherwise." It began.

Laughter came slowly at first. A row of marines squirmed, appearing to debate whether to leave. But they did not. Nobody did. People began laughing loudly. When it was over, after less than an hour, some even complained that it was too short.

Cpl. Richard Moulder, 21, who was dragged to the performance by his wife, said he was baffled at any suggestion that marines would not take to a show like that. "I mean these are the kinds of people marines are," he said of the characters that were portrayed. "About everybody who is in the Marines is in it because they have a broken home or because they're out to prove something."

At an off-base pizza parlor afterward, the cast members were back on familiar territory: industry connections, Manhattan real estate. But Mr. Driver was already thinking ahead. He turned to the drummer in the jazz band. "What would you think," he said, "about doing this in the Middle East?"

New York Times
January 10, 2008

30. Louisiana: Extension Of Guard Watch In New Orleans

By Associated Press

National Guard troops bolstering New Orleans's hurricane-depleted police force will remain in the city through June, a spokeswoman for Gov.-elect Bobby Jindal said. Guard troops have patrolled less-populated areas of the city, including the storm-ravaged Lower Ninth Ward, while the city and its police force have worked to bounce back from Hurricane Katrina and clamp down on violent crime.

Washington Post
January 10, 2008
Pg. D4

Federal Diary

31. Court Battle Continues Over Defense Union's Bargaining Rights

By Stephen Barr

Just as it appeared the Ping-Pong battle between the Defense Department and its largest union was ending, the union has stepped up to the table for one last serve.

The American Federation of Government Employees this week filed an appeal with the Supreme Court to stop a Bush administration effort to curb union rights in the department. The appeal marks the latest bounce in a legal case that began five years ago.

Only a few weeks ago, the dispute seemed settled. Congress, as part of the fiscal 2008 defense authorization bill, rejected the Pentagon's plan to weaken unions. The bill would place Defense labor relations and employee appeals back under regular civil service law, and unions would be able to continue negotiating binding contracts on the same scope of workplace issues as elsewhere in government.

But President Bush used a pocket veto to stop the bill over an entirely different issue -- a provision that officials said could leave Iraq's government and assets vulnerable to lawsuits from victims of Saddam Hussein. The union had hoped that Bush would sign the defense bill before Jan. 7, the union's deadline for filing a petition to the Supreme Court.

With the bill stalled, AFGE decided to put its legal case back in play. AFGE is contesting a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals last May that went in favor of the Pentagon. That ruling ended a string of union victories in court over the Bush administration's plan to restrict bargaining rights at the departments of Defense and Homeland Security.

AFGE, in the petition, contends that the appeals court ruling "is in conflict" with

another federal court decision in a similar case involving Homeland Security. Federal judges did not permit that department to severely curtail union rights, AFGE said, while a separate, three-judge appeals court panel, by 2 to 1, said the Defense Department could go ahead with its plan to curtail union rights.

The court fight grew out of workplace rules adopted by the Bush administration as part of the new National Security Personnel System being phased in and currently covers about 130,000 nonunion civilians at Defense. Bush officials have backed the new personnel system, which includes performance-based pay, as a way to reward the best workers and more efficiently address workplace issues.

But labor leaders, especially in the past year, have lobbied key Democratic representatives and senators to repeal the workplace rules, which were authorized in 2003 when Republicans controlled Congress.

House and Senate negotiators came up with a compromise -- restoring union rights but allowing the Pentagon to link part of the annual employee pay raise to job performance.

The White House has not objected to the compromise, suggesting that it will remain in the next version of the defense authorization bill Congress sends Bush. Legislation may remain the union's best chance of reversing the Pentagon workplace rules because the Supreme Court takes up a fraction of petitions filed every year.

Aerospace Daily & Defense Report

January 10, 2008

32. Democrats, Bush Clash Over Iraq Policy Great And Small

Lawmakers on Jan. 9, especially Democrats, chided

President Bush's "surge" of U.S. land forces to Iraq last year for not achieving policy benchmarks and called for a quick resolution over a confused debate about the status of the fiscal 2008 defense authorization measure.

"It is unfortunate and undeniable that one year after President Bush announced his 'surge' strategy, Iraq has failed to meet the benchmarks he outlined - and his administration has refused to hold Iraqis accountable for these unacceptable results," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said.

"No amount of White House spin can hide the fact that the escalation's chief objective of political reconciliation remains unmet, Iraqis have not demonstrated any readiness to stand up and take responsibility for their own country, and 2007 was the most lethal year yet for American troops," he added.

The remarks came a day after Bush lauded security gains brought by the boost in soldiers and Marines there, as well as local reconstruction efforts and an expected drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq.

"Improvements on the ground in Iraq are allowing some U.S. forces to return home. The strategy is called 'return on success,' Bush said before leaving Washington for a Middle East tour.

"It has now begun. I don't think most Americans know this, but one Army brigade and one Marine expeditionary unit have come home - and will not be replaced. And in the coming months, four additional brigades and two Marine battalions will follow suit," the president stressed.

Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) and Rand Beers, president of the National Security Network, told reporters that Congress should concentrate on trying to pass legislation this year that directs U.S. forces away from major combat operations in Iraq. "We need to transition the

mission of our troops to focus on our national security objectives - fighting terrorists, maintaining Iraq's border integrity, and training Iraqi soldiers," Nelson said.

"Rather than unconditionally supporting an endless war the American people oppose, I strongly urge the president to work with Congress to redeploy our troops and refocus the mission in Iraq so we can more effectively fight the war on terror," Reid echoed separately.

Meanwhile, Nelson and Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.) also told reporters in different appearances that they hope the White House and Hill leaders can quickly hammer out a new nonwar defense policy bill after Bush declared a veto of a congressionally passed measure last month. Both lawmakers complained that the administration should have raised its objections to an Iraqi funds provision far earlier, but both said the issue should not hold up enactment of otherwise agreed-to legislation.

Bartlett said he would vote to uphold Bush's veto threat, despite his own questions on its applicability. Some lawmakers have questioned the alleged pocket veto, which can be used when Congress has adjourned for the year, as invalid since the Senate was hosting pro forma sessions at the time.

-- Michael Bruno

Philadelphia Inquirer
January 10, 2008

33. Government Slow To Declassify Documents, Advisory Panel Says

By Pete Yost, Associated Press
WASHINGTON - The government is lagging far behind in declassifying its secrets, and the problem is getting worse as agencies create billions more electronic records containing classified information.

In a report released

yesterday, a joint presidential-congressional advisory group urged greater openness, a sore subject for a White House roundly criticized for secrecy.

The Public Interest Declassification Board said President Bush could take immediate steps to address the issue. For example, it said, the White House should retain the president's daily brief prepared by the CIA so historians, researchers and the public can eventually learn what the intelligence community tells the nation's chief executive.

Secrecy and the president's daily brief became a contentious issue in the work of the 9/11 commission, with the White House aggressively resisting public disclosure of the secret documents, including one that focused on Osama bin Laden's intention to attack targets inside the United States.

The Aug. 6, 2001, daily brief the administration reluctantly released during the 2004 presidential campaign was titled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in the U.S."

The board's report says the president could immediately create a national declassification program under the U.S. archivist to increase efficiency. Under the program, all federal agencies would report declassification decisions on a single computerized system.

White House spokesman Tony Fratto said it would be premature to comment on any specific recommendation in the report, which has been sent to heads of relevant government departments for review and comment.

While more than a billion pages have been declassified since 1995, the report says the government has not yet come to grips with what it will face in the future. "Too little has been done with regard to ... the truly monumental problem looming on the horizon: the review of classified information contained in

electronic records."

In addition, the report said, the government probably will be unable to meet a Dec. 31, 2011, deadline for reviewing classified information on microfilm, microfiche, motion pictures and sound recordings.

In 1995, President Bill Clinton signed an executive order declaring that records would be presumed declassified when they reached 25 years of age. At the time, it was believed this would encourage agencies to declassify records in bulk. Instead, agencies hired more personnel to review records, a process that took 12 years.

Meredith Fuchs, general counsel to the National Security Archive, a private group that seeks declassification of government secrets, describes the report as "a wake-up call" to the president.

"The report paints a picture of a classification system bogged down by agency territoriality and reflexive secrecy," she said. "If this president won't deal with it, maybe the next one will."

Among key recommendations, the report says the president should create a system to identify historically significant classified records so they get priority in reviews for possible public disclosure.

It also urges the U.S. archivist to establish a single center in Washington to house all future classified presidential records from the end of an administration until their eventual declassification, when they would be transferred to the appropriate presidential library.

The president should also require a new National Declassification Center to create uniform guidelines to govern declassification across the government, the report says.

Baltimore Sun
January 10, 2008

34. Northrop To Lead

Bid For Army Plane

Northrop Grumman Corp., the third-largest U.S. defense contractor, said yesterday that it would lead a team to compete for the Army's Aerial Common Sensor, a new surveillance aircraft. Partners include L-3 Communications Corp. and units of Textron Inc. and General Dynamics Corp. George Seffers, a Northrop spokesman, declined to provide details on the bid because the Army's formal request for proposals hasn't been issued yet.

London Daily Telegraph
January 10, 2008

Pg. 12

35. British At Risk From Contaminated US Blood

By Laura Clout

British soldiers have been put at risk of contracting deadly diseases from contaminated American blood, it was claimed last night.

The 18 servicemen received emergency blood transfusions at American field hospitals after being seriously wounded in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But after it emerged that some batches were not properly screened for lethal infections such as HIV and hepatitis, the soldiers must wait for the results of medical tests to find out whether they have been affected.

The details emerged after the Pentagon admitted to the Ministry of Defence that some batches of the blood had not been properly screened and certified for medical use.

The MoD last night insisted the risk of infection was low. A spokesman said: "The small number of people we have identified all received emergency blood transfusions or blood products in US medical facilities.

"When you are in a situation where an individual is about to die, you get them to the nearest medical facility,

whether that is an American or other coalition facility."

He added: "If anyone has any concerns they should get their GP or medical officer to check them."

All the soldiers have been tracked down, and several have already received negative test results, the spokesman said.

However, a number of others, including one soldier who was only notified of the risk last night, face a wait of up to three weeks to learn whether they are in the clear.

Derek Twigg MP, Under Secretary of State for Defence said: "These 18 Service Personnel would almost certainly have died without receiving an emergency blood transfusion at the front line. The Defence Secretary acted quickly to ensure that those British service personnel involved were informed as soon as possible.

"The actual risk of any infection is low - however we are taking it extremely seriously. We are working with the appropriate health authorities to do all that we can to test and reassure the people involved. We are, and will continue to do all that we can to support them and their families through this uncertain time."

Military sources compared the situation to the death of 25-year-old Lance Corporal Matty Hull during a 'friendly fire' incident in Basra.

A high-ranking army officer told The Sun: "This scandal is an even more grotesque example of 'friendly fire' than the Matty Hull case because that could be partly put down to the fog of war.

"It was entirely avoidable and we cannot understand how the Americans allowed something like this to happen."

Wall Street Journal
January 10, 2008
Pg. 15

36. The Surge Worked

By John McCain and Joe Lieberman

It was exactly one year ago tonight, in a televised address to the nation, that President George W. Bush announced his fateful decision to change course in Iraq, and to send five additional U.S. combat brigades there as part of a new counterinsurgency strategy and under the command of a new general, David Petraeus.

At the time of its announcement, the so-called surge was met with deep skepticism by many Americans -- and understandably so.

After years of mismanagement of the war, many people had grave doubts about whether success in Iraq was possible. In Congress, opposition to the surge from antiwar members was swift and severe. They insisted that Iraq was already "lost," and that there was nothing left to do but accept our defeat and retreat.

In fact, they could not have been more wrong. And had we heeded their calls for retreat, Iraq today would be a country in chaos: a failed state in the heart of the Middle East, overrun by al Qaeda and Iran.

Instead, conditions in that country have been utterly transformed from those of a year ago, as a consequence of the surge. Whereas, a year ago, al Qaeda in Iraq was entrenched in Anbar province and Baghdad, now the forces of Islamist extremism are facing their single greatest and most humiliating defeat since the loss of Afghanistan in 2001. Thanks to the surge, the Sunni Arabs who once constituted the insurgency's core of support in Iraq have been empowered to rise up against the suicide bombers and fanatics in their midst -- prompting Osama bin Laden to call them "traitors."

As al Qaeda has been beaten back, violence across the country has dropped dramatically. The number of car bombings, sectarian murders and suicide attacks has been slashed. American casualties have also fallen

sharply, decreasing in each of the past four months.

These gains are thrilling but not yet permanent. Political progress has been slow. And although al Qaeda and the other extremists in Iraq have been dealt a critical blow, they will strike back at the Iraqi people and us if we give them the chance, as our generals on the ground continue to warn us.

The question we face, on the first anniversary of the surge, is no longer whether the president's decision a year ago was the right one, or if the counterinsurgency strategy developed by Gen. Petraeus is working. It is.

The question now is where we go from here to sustain the progress we have achieved -- and in particular, how soon can more of our troops come home, based on the success of the surge.

Gen. Petraeus has already announced that five "surge" brigades will be withdrawn by mid-July. The process is now underway. The Pentagon has also announced that it is conducting a series of internal reviews to examine whether and when additional troops can be withdrawn -- with Gen. Petraeus, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. Central Command each asked to offer their own analysis. As the president awaits these recommendations, it is important for the rest of us to keep some realities in mind.

First, it is unknown whether the security gains we have achieved with the surge can be sustained -- and deepened -- after we have drawn down to 15 brigades. Until we know with certainty that we can keep al Qaeda on the run with 15 brigades, it would be a mistake to commit ourselves preemptively to a drawdown below that number.

As the surge should have taught us by now, troop numbers matter in Iraq. We should adjust those numbers based on conditions on the ground and the recommendations of our

commanders in Iraq -- first and foremost, Gen. Petraeus, who above all others has proven that he knows how to steer this war to a successful outcome.

Every American should feel a debt of gratitude to Gen. Petraeus and the great American troops fighting under him for us. This gratitude is due not simply for the extraordinary progress they have accomplished in Iraq, but for what they have taught us about ourselves.

If the mismanagement of the Iraq war from 2003 to 2006 exposed our government's capacity for incompetence, Gen. Petraeus' leadership this past year, and the conduct of the troops under his command, have reminded us of our capacity for the wisdom, the courage and the leadership that has always rallied our nation to greatness.

As Americans, we have repeatedly done what others said was impossible. Gen. Petraeus and his troops are doing that again in Iraq today.

The war for Iraq is not over. The gains we have made can be lost. But thanks to the courage of our troops, the skill and intellect of their battlefield commander, and the steadfastness of our commander in chief, we have at last begun to see the contours of what must remain our objective in this long, hard and absolutely necessary war -- victory.

Mr. McCain is a Republican senator from Arizona. Mr. Lieberman is an Independent Democratic senator from Connecticut.

Washington Times
January 10, 2008
Pg. 17

37. Modernizing The U.S Military

Soldiers' lives depend on getting it right
By Daniel L. Davis

Between now and the Feb. 5 "Super Duper Tuesday," America will get serious about scrutinizing its presidential

candidates to ascertain where they stand on the most important issues. Regarding defense policy, virtually all the focus has thus far understandably been on how and when to end the war in Iraq and bring the troops home. This is an important issue, to be sure. But there is another defense topic that is ultimately of much greater importance that must now share some of the attention.

The next administration will be responsible for making some critical decisions regarding the future of America's armed forces in general and for the Army in particular; get Army modernization wrong and we could unwittingly lay the foundation for our defeat on a future battlefield.

In the years between World War I and II, France was at the forefront of technological development and force modernization. It was recognized as the victor over Germany in the Great War and was universally recognized as the most dominant military power in Europe. It had every advantage imaginable and access to all the cutting-edge technology then available. And yet, as is now well known, in May 1940 the vaunted French army was thoroughly routed by the German Wehrmacht.

What is less known, however, is that Germany possessed neither a quantitative nor qualitative technological advantage over France. Germany did, however, combine the best utility of technology with organizational and doctrinal reform that enabled it to win over what should have been a superior force. In short, Germany got 20th-century modernization right and France got it wrong. America is today at a 21st-century modernization crossroad.

Since shortly after Desert Storm, some of America's senior military leaders have been seeking to modernize and transform the Department of

Defense into a force capable of dominating all challengers in any future battle. At its core, this transformation seeks to exploit technology and link dispersed warfighting platforms and soldiers with a vast array of intelligence assets and sensors to enable friendly forces to maneuver to positions of advantage and rain devastating firepower down on the enemy. While some components of the Defense Department's efforts are outstanding and promise significant advantage to future American forces, other elements are so far off the mark that if remedial actions are not taken, American forces could suffer a significant battlefield defeat in future war — a defeat that might otherwise be avoidable.

Suggesting the United States could lose a future battle would seem to be out of place in relation to America's known military prowess, which is commonly described as being the most powerful military power in the history of the world. Beginning with Desert Storm in 1991 and reinforced so convincingly in the initial stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the military's conventional domination over all potential enemies seems beyond question. What, then, is the factual basis for such concern?

To date, our modernization efforts have: led some among us to exaggerate what technology can do and to underestimate what the enemy can do; of our own volition we have reduced the combat power of current organizations in the as-yet-unproven promise of what technology will someday be able to do; in the belief our air- and space-based intelligence platforms will always give us sufficient critical information about the enemy to offset this decrease in mass, we have dissolved the most powerful reconnaissance formation in our nation's history and replaced it with an organization that cannot

operate in sub-optimal conditions; we plan to replace what has been proven in combat as the world's best main battle tank with a lightly armored vehicle which may not be able to survive head-to-head engagements with enemy tanks; and despite numerous, high-level Defense Department and governmental studies explicitly quantifying the threat China's military poses to future American forces, the Army has made no effort to design a future force capable of defending against such a threat (for a detailed analysis see my essay, "Heavy and Agile," at www.armedforcesjournal.com).

The next administration will have the responsibility for setting Army modernization policy. It is therefore crucial to ascertain where each candidate stands on defense modernization because the decisions the eventual winner makes in the first 100 days in office will establish the type of Army we have for the next several decades. Though economic, social and foreign policy are of great importance, we must press each candidate to articulate their vision of Army modernization and how they'll correct the deficiencies that currently plague our efforts.

The lives of our soldiers and success or failure on future battlefields depends on getting this right.

Maj. Daniel L. Davis is a cavalry officer who fought in Desert Storm in 1991 and served in Afghanistan in 2005. The opinions expressed are his own and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Defense or the Army.

Wall Street Journal
January 10, 2008
Pg. 14

38. Iran's Provocation

By Walter Russell Mead

"It was a dangerous gesture," said President George W. Bush about Sunday's incident that involved five

vessels, apparently under orders from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, harassing U.S. naval forces in international waters in the Straits of Hormuz. They broke off moments before the Americans opened fire.

"An ordinary occurrence," said a spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

"There will be serious consequences if they attack our ships," Mr. Bush countered.

Mr. Bush is right, and the world came very close to war on Sunday. From the 18th century to the present day, threats to American ships and maritime commerce have been the way most U.S. wars start. The pattern began early. Attacks by the Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean led President Thomas Jefferson to send the U.S. Navy thousands of miles on a risky expedition to suppress the threat to American merchant ships in 1801. During the Napoleonic Wars, British and French interference with U.S. commerce led to a series of crises and undeclared "quasi-wars" that culminated in the War of 1812.

Sumatran attacks on U.S. ships in the 1830s led President Andrew Jackson to dispatch naval forces on a retaliatory mission. The widespread (though probably erroneous) U.S. belief that the USS *Maine* had been destroyed by a Spanish mine in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, forced a reluctant President William McKinley to launch the Spanish-American War in 1898.

The 20th century was no different. German attacks on U.S. ships in World War I brought America into that war; the Japanese attack on the fleet at Pearl Harbor brought the U.S. into World War II. The Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964 (alleged attacks on U.S. ships by North Vietnamese boats) led Congress to authorize President Lyndon Johnson's use of force in Indochina. The North Korean seizure of the

USS Pueblo in 1968 touched off a near-war crisis at the height of the Vietnam conflict, and the Cambodian seizure of the Mayaguez, a container ship, led President Gerald Ford to dispatch combat forces back to Indochina less than one month after the U.S. withdrawal from Saigon in 1975. President Ronald Reagan dispatched forces to Libya in the 1980s when Moammar Gadhafi tried to claim the international waters off his coast behind a "Line of Death." President Bill Clinton rattled the saber when Chinese forces fired missiles in the Taiwan Straits in 1995 and 1996.

Geography and interest have made freedom of the seas a persistent flashpoint in U.S. history: The U.S. is relatively safe from land assault, but our commerce is vulnerable to naval attacks. And international trade has been a vital interest. British restrictions on colonial trade stoked American anger, and British closure of the port of Boston helped turn discontent into revolution. The record is plain: Those who interfere with American maritime activity, whether naval or commercial, strike at a vital interest that Americans for more than two centuries have consistently defended by, if necessary, war.

Such crises tend to unite American opinion behind even unpopular presidents. Two centuries of experience have created a broad consensus in the U.S. that the freedom of the seas cannot be compromised or abandoned.

The link between global freedom of the seas and foreign policy has been a driving force in modern world history. Like Britain before us, the U.S. is a commercial power whose economic interests have led it to play a unique global role in the interests of making the world hospitable to its investments and trade. The Pax Britannica and the Pax Americana have both rested on sea power, and any country that challenges America's

ability to secure vital sea lanes risks the full weight of U.S. military power.

The Straits of Hormuz, site of the weekend provocation, are exceptionally sensitive. The ability of the U.S. to protect the free flow of oil through these waters is absolutely vital to the global economy. Any U.S. military response to a challenge there would be swift and overwhelming -- perhaps far greater than the Iranians expect.

The danger of war between the U.S. and Iran over free passage in the Straits is very real. Iranian authorities may not fully understand the political and military consequences of such raids. The commanders of the maritime forces of the Revolutionary Guard, by all accounts less professional than the commanders of Iran's regular navy, may be operating without central authority, and may have underestimated the likelihood and the scale of the probable U.S. response. Believing that retaliation would be minor and half-hearted, they may even be seeking a limited confrontation with the U.S. for domestic political reasons.

Last weekend, the Iranians fled before shots were fired. Good for them. If Iran wants a large-scale military conflict with a U.S. that is angry, aroused and united, endangering American naval vessels in the Straits of Hormuz is the right way to get one.

Mr. Mead is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of "God and Gold: Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World" (Knopf, 2007).

New York Times
January 10, 2008

39. Correction

An article on Wednesday about President Bush's criticism of Iran for confronting American warships

over the weekend misstated the conclusion of a recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iran, which Mr. Bush also discussed. The intelligence estimate, issued in December, concluded that in 2003 Iran halted its program to develop a nuclear weapon; it did not say that Iran had abandoned its efforts to enrich uranium.

Editor's Note: The article by Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Thom Shanker appeared in the *Current News Early Bird*, January 9, 2008.