

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD



January 14, 2008

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Item numbers indicate order of appearance only.

IRAN

1. **Bush Urges Unity Against Iran**
(*New York Times*)....Steven Lee Myers
President Bush on Sunday urged wary Persian Gulf allies to rally against Iran "before it is too late," even as the International Atomic Energy Agency announced that the country had agreed, yet again, to answer outstanding questions about its nuclear programs within four weeks.
2. **Bush Urges United Action Against Iran**
(*Washington Post*)....Michael Abramowitz
...Bush has warned Iran that it faces "serious consequences" for a recent incident in which the Pentagon accused Iranian Revolutionary Guard speedboats of harassing U.S. warships in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital passage for oil. Iran has challenged the U.S. account of the incident. New details have emerged in past days that raised questions about parts of the initial account, including a Pentagon acknowledgment that a threatening radio message heard by the U.S. ships may not have come from the Iranians.
3. **Navy Commanders Detail Incident With Iranian Speed Boats**
(*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*)....Steve Stone
...Adler and Cmdr. Jeffery James, of the destroyer Hopper, met with reporters for about 20 minutes at the Bahrain headquarters of the Navy's 5th Fleet, which patrols the Persian Gulf. The Navy later released a video of the news conference. The Pearl Harbor-based ships came close to opening fire on the Iranian boats Jan. 6 near Iranian waters in the Strait of Hormuz, but the boats finally turned away.
4. **Bothersome Intel On Iran**
(*Newsweek*)....Michael Hirsh
...That NIE, made public Dec. 3, embarrassed the administration by concluding that Tehran had halted its weapons program in 2003, which seemed to undermine years of bellicose rhetoric from Bush and other senior officials about Iran's nuclear ambitions. But in private conversations with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert last week, the president all but disowned the document, said a senior administration official who accompanied Bush on his six-nation trip to the Mideast.
5. **In Iran Reversal, Bureaucrats Triumphed Over Cheney Team**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Jay Solomon and Siobhan Gorman
As President Bush arrives in Saudi Arabia today, America's Arab and Israeli allies have been buzzing about the recent sea change in Washington's perception of Iran. The December report by the U.S.'s top spy office stating Iran had abandoned its effort to build nuclear weapons was one of the biggest U-turns in the recent history of U.S. intelligence.

GUANTANAMO

6. **Gitmo Should Close, Chairman Of Joint Chiefs Says**
(*USA Today*)....Associated Press

The chief of the U.S. military said Sunday that he favors closing the prison here as soon as possible because negative publicity about treatment of terrorism suspects has been "pretty damaging" to the image of the United States.

IRAQ

7. **U.S. Shifts Sunni Strategy In Iraq**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Peter Spiegel
Focus moves from neighborhoods to the parliament in an effort to get government jobs for thousands of men now working in local security programs.
8. **Iraq Offensive: Clear Out Militants – And Stay**
(*Christian Science Monitor*)....Scott Peterson
US forces are solidifying control over some of the most persistent militant strongholds of Al Qaeda in Iraq northeast of Baghdad, drawing on a new counterinsurgency model that has already seen some success in troubled Diyala Province.
9. **An Iraqi House Was Rigged To Kill American Soldiers**
(*New York Times*)....Stephen Farrell
The courtyard was a scene of devastation, strewn with medieval mud brick and modern cinder block, shattered alike by the explosion that killed six American soldiers and their Iraqi interpreter.
10. **Iraqi Political Factions Jointly Pressure Kurds**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Ned Parker
Several Shiite and Sunni political factions united Sunday to pressure the Kurds over control of oil and the future of the Iraqi city of Kirkuk, which Kurdistan wishes to annex to its self-ruled region in the north.
11. **U.S. Forces Finishing Al Qaeda Sweep In Diyala**
(*Washington Times*)....Richard Tomkins
U.S. military forces say they have largely completed combat operations and are working to consolidate their gains after a six-day push into the so-called "Bread Basket" area of Diyala province.
12. **In Diyala, A New Offensive**
(*Newsweek*)....Lennox Samuels
...The military's Operation Iron Harvest—a major offensive to drive Al Qaeda in Iraq from Diyala province—was underway, and the troops from Blackfoot Company were in the vanguard, tasked with securing the area for their comrades in the rear. I was along to watch.
13. **For Haifa Street, A Welcome Calm**
(*U.S. News & World Report*)....Linda Robinson
U.S. troops begin a quiet drawdown, hoping that locals don't notice.
14. **Ex-Baathists Get A Break. Or Do They?**
(*New York Times*)....Solomon Moore
A day after the Iraqi Parliament passed legislation billed as the first significant political step forward in Iraq after months of deadlock, there were troubling questions — and troubling silences — about the measure's actual effects.
15. **Who's Left In The Coalition?**
(*Parade Magazine*)....Unattributed
Foreign troops have shrunk by 75%.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

16. **Gates Expected To Offer Few Changes In FY09 Budget Plan**
(*National Journal's CongressDailyPM*)....Megan Scully
The Pentagon's FY09 budget request marks Defense Secretary Gates' first real chance to set military spending priorities, but analysts do not expect to see a major shake-up in the department's longstanding plans for high-priced weapons systems.
17. **Voters In Uniform Watch From Afar**

(*Long Island Newsday*)....Martin C. Evans

U.S. military serving overseas are closely following campaigns, saying next president will have major impact on their future.

ARMY

18. Medical Care For Soldiers In Transition

(*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*)....Gregg K. Kakesako

Forty-five minutes after Spc. Joseph Gentile was injured by a roadside bomb in Kirkuk, his parents in Ohio were notified of his condition by the 25th Division's 27th Wolfhounds Regiment.

MARINE CORPS

19. Murder Suspect Seen In Louisiana

(*Philadelphia Inquirer*)....Associated Press

The key suspect in the slaying of a 20-year-old pregnant Marine was spotted in Louisiana and could be headed into Texas, authorities said yesterday.

AIR FORCE

20. Long Wait For Justice

(*Air Force Times*)....Erik Holmes

Held responsible for airmen's deaths for more than a decade, general feels vindicated.

NATIONAL GUARD/RESERVE

21. Begging, Borrowing To Help Our Soldiers

(*Baltimore Sun*)....David Wood

With more than 1,000 Md. National Guard troops due home soon, resources to ease the transition are scarce.

AFGHANISTAN

22. Error By Allies And 2 Clashes Kill 15 In South Of Afghanistan

(*New York Times*)....Abdul Waheed Wafa and Taimoor Shah

Two NATO soldiers, two Afghan soldiers and 11 Afghan police officers were killed in separate clashes in the volatile southern region of Afghanistan, officials said Sunday.

23. Many Afghans Still Living In Dark

(*USA Today*)....Jason Straziuso, Associated Press

...More than five years after the fall of the Taliban — and despite hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid — dinner by candlelight remains common in the Afghan capital. Nationwide, only 6% of Afghans have electricity, the Asian Development Bank says.

ASIA/PACIFIC

24. A Bid For Better Military Relations With China

(*Christian Science Monitor*)....Gordon Lubold

High-level meetings are part of Admiral Keating's trip this week, following a flap over Hong Kong port visit by USS Kitty Hawk.

PAKISTAN

25. Scores Of Militants Die In Raid On Army

(*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*)....Unattributed

Hundreds of Islamic militants attacked a Pakistani military base in Lhada, near the Afghan border, sparking fighting that killed between 40 and 50 insurgents in some of the deadliest clashes in weeks in the lawless region, the army reported Sunday.

26. **Poll Highlights Mistrust Of Leader**
(Boston Globe)...Associated Press
 Nearly half of Pakistanis surveyed suspect that government agencies or government-linked politicians killed Benazir Bhutto, according to an opinion poll, highlighting popular mistrust in the country's US-allied president ahead of elections next month.

EUROPE

27. **Official Seeks More Security For U.S. Base**
(Chicago Tribune)...Tribune news services
 ...Bogdan Klich, who will go to the U.S. on Tuesday for talks on the program with Defense Secretary Robert Gates, said a base would expose Poland to new threats, chiefly from terrorists, and it would be "very difficult" to persuade Poles to support the program without more security measures.
28. **Georgians Back NATO Membership**
(Moscow Times)...Associated Press
 More than 70 percent of Georgians who took part in a nationwide referendum said they wanted the country to join NATO, according to results released Friday.

INTELLIGENCE

29. **A Look Back Reveals Forward Thinking**
(Washington Post)...Walter Pincus
 Insights still worth pondering today are contained in a 33-year-old top-secret Special National Intelligence Estimate called "Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons." The 50-page assessment was released in declassified form by the CIA last week with some 40 others in response to Freedom of Information Act requests.

USO

30. **USO Donations Up 50% Since 2007**
(Washington Times)...Wendy Schibener
 An estimated 50 percent increase in donations to the United Service Organizations since 2007 shows that support for U.S. troops in Iraq has not dwindled since the onset of the war.

BUSINESS

31. **Airbus To Raise Ante In Bid For Military-Tanker Deal**
(Wall Street Journal)...August Cole
 Airbus will announce today that it will produce commercial freighter jets alongside Air Force tankers in Mobile, Ala., if it wins a hotly contested defense contract this year, according to people familiar with the situation.
32. **US Will Push Ahead With Arms Sale To Saudi Arabia**
(Financial Times)...Daniel Dombey and Simeon Kerr
 The Bush administration will move ahead with a high-profile arms sale to Saudi Arabia as early as today, as part of a \$20bn package of deals with the Gulf states.

OPINION

33. **The Lessons Of Iraq**
(Wall Street Journal)...Erik Swabb
 While the improved security situation in Iraq is changing views about the chances for success there, one common belief has remained unchanged: that the war is eroding U.S. military capabilities.
34. **Afghans, Report For Duty**
(New York Times)...Ronald E. Neumann
 ...A better strategy would be to institute a draft in Afghanistan. A draft would make it possible to gather a much larger military force, and far more quickly, around the core professional force already in place.

35. **No Plan To Fight Taliban, Al Qaeda**

(Miami Herald)....Robert Weiner and John Larmett

...The U.S. military, afraid to disrupt the economies of U.S.-friendly Afghanistan and Pakistan, has turned a blind eye rather than attempt to eradicate the drug trade. Opium production on our watch has increased 33 fold from 185 tons in 2001 under the Taliban to 6,100 tons in 2006.

36. **It's Not About Iran**

(Washington Post)....Shibley Telhami

As President Bush travels through the Middle East, the prevailing assumption is that Arab states are primarily focused on the rising Iranian threat and that their attendance at the Annapolis conference with Israel in November was motivated by this threat. This assumption, reflected in the president's speech in the United Arab Emirates yesterday, could be a costly mistake.

New York Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 10

1. Bush Urges Unity Against Iran

By Steven Lee Myers

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — President Bush on Sunday urged wary Persian Gulf allies to rally against Iran “before it is too late,” even as the International Atomic Energy Agency announced that the country had agreed, yet again, to answer outstanding questions about its nuclear programs within four weeks.

In an address to government and business leaders in an opulent hotel here, Mr. Bush focused not only on what the United States believes are Iran’s nuclear ambitions but also its suspected support for Islamic militants in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. He called Iran’s government “the world’s leading sponsor of terrorism” and accused it of imposing repression and economic hardship at home.

“Iran’s actions threaten the security of nations everywhere,” he said. “So the United States is strengthening our longstanding security commitments with our friends in the gulf and rallying friends around the world to confront this danger before it is too late.”

The announcement about Iran’s pledge of cooperation on its nuclear program, however, could undercut efforts to build international support against Tehran. It came after a visit to Iran this weekend by Mohamed ElBaradei, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations’ nuclear monitoring agency, who met with Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran agreed to carry out its pledges, made last year, to resolve suspicions about its nuclear programs, though the state news agency said it expected the United Nations

Security Council to drop its sanctions in return. The announcement essentially delayed for another month what had been an end-of-the-year deadline to disclose all of its nuclear work, including any covert or undeclared military research.

Over the past year and a half the Iranians have repeatedly made declarations that they would answer outstanding questions within a week, but each of those deadlines has passed with only partial answers offered.

With Mr. Bush in the middle of a trip to the region intended to build a united Arab front against Iran, the White House acknowledged that the announcement represented progress, but expressed skepticism about Iran’s willingness to provide complete information. It also said Iran was still obliged to suspend its enrichment of uranium, as required by the Security Council.

“Answering questions about their past nuclear activities is a step,” said Gordon D. Johndroe, a White House spokesman. “But they still need to suspend their enrichment and reprocessing activity. Another declaration is no substitute for complying with the U.N. sanctions.”

Administration officials say many Arab states are wary of Iran’s growing power and influence in the region, especially among Shiite minorities in predominately Sunni nations like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

In recent months, however, the gulf states have shown signs of reaching out diplomatically to Iran. Saudi Arabia gave permission to Iran’s president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Gulf Cooperation Council also extended him an invitation to a summit meeting last month.

Mr. Bush began his Middle East trip in Israel, focused on brokering an Israeli-Palestinian peace, but

Iran has loomed large in his travels, particularly after a confrontation in the Strait of Hormuz a week ago between three American warships and five Iranian speedboats.

The Pentagon has appeared to back away from part of its initial account of that encounter. In Bahrain, where Mr. Bush began his day on Sunday, the commanders of the two American ships involved said that a threatening radio message may not have come from the Iranian boats.

The commanders said they took the radio warning seriously nevertheless, because it was broadcast as the Iranian speedboats were maneuvering in what they viewed as a provocative manner around the American ships. Because the warning, that the American ships would explode, was broadcast over an open maritime radio channel, it could have come from another ship in the area or from somewhere on shore.

In a news conference at the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet, the officers also said they had determined that boxes dropped into the water by the Iranians were not dangerous, as feared at the time, and were probably a ruse to study the reaction of the Navy warships. “Whether it was coincidental or not, it occurred at exactly the same time that these boats were around us,” Cmdr. Jeffery James of the Hopper, a destroyer, said of the radioed threat, “and they were placing objects in the water so the threat appeared to be building.”

For the second time in two months, Mr. Bush found himself making a case about Iran’s threat in the face of developments that seemed to undercut it. In December, an American intelligence report concluded that Iran had suspended a nuclear weapons program in 2003, a finding that has delayed a new round of United Nations sanctions.

In his meetings, in Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Bush and his

aides have tried to press leaders to do more to help the United States to isolate Iran’s leaders. Privately, Mr. Bush has urged Persian Gulf leaders to restrict Iran’s access to banks and other financial institutions, one administration official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to discuss internal deliberations.

In addition to sanctions already imposed by the United Nations Security Council over Iran’s failure to comply with demands involving its nuclear programs, the administration has lobbied for countries to enforce American sanctions against four state-owned banks in Iran and the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards. Ayatollah Khamenei appeared to be referring to the administration’s efforts on Sunday when he declared, “Americans mistakenly think they can bring the Iranian nation to its knees with pressure,” according to the news agency ISNA.

Mr. Bush used his speech here on Sunday to call for greater political freedom in the region.

“You cannot build trust when you hold an election where opposition candidates find themselves harassed or in prison,” he said at the Emirates Palace, a large hotel on the Persian Gulf, built at a cost of \$3 billion.

“You cannot expect people to believe in the promise of a better future when they are jailed for peacefully petitioning their government,” he continued. “And you cannot stand up a modern and confident nation when you do not allow people to voice their legitimate criticisms.”

Except for Iran, though, Mr. Bush did not single out any country, including his host, the United Arab Emirates, whose record on human rights “remained problematic,” according to the State Department’s most recent human rights report.

Thom Shanker contributed

reporting from Washington, and Nazila Fathi from Tehran.

Washington Post
January 14, 2008
Pg. 18

2. Bush Urges United Action Against Iran

Nuclear Agency Gets Pledge From Tehran to Explain Past Work

By Michael Abramowitz,
Washington Post Staff Writer

In a speech described by the White House as the centerpiece of his eight-day trip to the Middle East, Bush urged other countries to help the United States "confront this danger before it is too late."

Bush sought to address the Iranian people directly, saying: "You have a right to live under a government that listens to your wishes, respects your talents and allows you to build better lives for your families. Unfortunately, your government denies you these opportunities and threatens the peace and stability of your neighbors. So we call on the regime in Tehran to heed your will and to make itself accountable to you."

Iranian officials, meanwhile, pledged to answer all remaining questions about their country's past nuclear activities within four weeks, the Associated Press reported. The timetable was announced by a spokeswoman for Mohamed ElBaradei, chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who wrapped up a two-day visit to Tehran that included meetings with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader.

White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said the Iranian move was not enough. "Answering questions about their past nuclear activities is a step, but they still need to suspend their enrichment and reprocessing activity," he said. "Another declaration is no substitute for complying with the U.N. sanctions."

Bush's comments on Iran were part of a speech devoted

to advancing the cause of freedom and democracy in the Middle East. It was the latest in a steady volley of attacks on the country in the past week that began even before he left for Jerusalem last Tuesday.

Bush is trying to persuade Arab countries to join U.S. efforts to pressure Iran, though many appear ambivalent about the administration's campaign following a new U.S. intelligence report that concluded Iran stopped a nuclear weapons program in 2003.

On Monday, Bush will travel to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, viewed by many inside and outside the administration as the linchpin of efforts to develop an anti-Iran coalition. As part of an attempt to show its commitment to Saudi Arabia, a senior administration official said the White House plans to notify Congress about a substantial arms sale package for the Saudis. The package is expected to be worth \$20 billion.

Bush has warned Iran that it faces "serious consequences" for a recent incident in which the Pentagon accused Iranian Revolutionary Guard speedboats of harassing U.S. warships in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital passage for oil. Iran has challenged the U.S. account of the incident.

New details have emerged in past days that raised questions about parts of the initial account, including a Pentagon acknowledgment that a threatening radio message heard by the U.S. ships may not have come from the Iranians.

The commander of one of the U.S. ships said Sunday that the message was taken seriously because it came as Iranian vessels swarmed the American fleet, the Associated Press reported.

"This was not a loose bunch of guys," said Cmdr. Jeffery James of the destroyer USS Hopper. "During this entire time, we were going through our pre-planned

responses trying to warn them off before we had to take any lethal action. And fortunately for everyone involved, they turned outbound before we needed to open fire," he said.

James and Capt. David Adler of the cruiser USS Port Royal spoke to reporters Sunday at the Bahrain headquarters of the Navy's Fifth Fleet, which patrols the Persian Gulf. Neither would say how close the Navy was to firing at the Iranian boats.

Before leaving Bahrain for Abu Dhabi, Bush visited the headquarters, where he talked about the incident with Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff, the fleet commander. One senior administration official, briefing reporters about the visit, said Cosgriff discussed the behavior of the vessels and why they were threatening, and reminded the president that the Navy lost lives in the attack on the USS Cole from small vessels filled with explosives.

Iran has sharply disputed the U.S. allegations. "We exercised restraint, and we very calmly announced that this was a routine procedure, but they tried to ... raise this issue at the same time when Mr. Bush was traveling to the region in order to paint Iran in a negative light," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini told reporters, the Reuters news agency reported.

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
January 14, 2008

3. Navy Commanders Detail Incident With Iranian Speed Boats

By Steve Stone, The
Virginian-Pilot

A week after five Iranian speedboats swarmed around several Navy ships in a tense confrontation in the Strait of Hormuz, the commander of one of the U.S. vessels had a simple message Sunday.

"We're not looking to start anything," said Capt. David Adler, of the guided missile cruiser Port Royal. "We're here

for the support of regional stability... to keep the strait open for international traffic."

But, Adler pledged, "We won't let the ships get attacked."

Adler and Cmdr. Jeffery James, of the destroyer Hopper, met with reporters for about 20 minutes at the Bahrain headquarters of the Navy's 5th Fleet, which patrols the Persian Gulf. The Navy later released a video of the news conference.

The Pearl Harbor-based ships came close to opening fire on the Iranian boats Jan. 6 near Iranian waters in the Strait of Hormuz, but the boats finally turned away.

The two officers said nothing had seemed amiss as their ships approached the strait.

They began receiving radio "queries" as to their identity and intentions - normal in busy shipping lanes.

The first came from Iranian warships while the Navy vessels were still in the Gulf of Oman. A few more followed from ships and Iranian shore stations.

"It was normal and not threatening, and we just continued on," Adler said.

He said he felt the Navy ships had clearly identified themselves by the time the speedboats approached.

"They came at us as a group of five, in a formation, very professionally formed up," James said. "This was not a loose band of guys. I mean, they knew what they were doing."

"We saw Iranian flags on at least one," Adler said. And one had what appeared to be a weapons mount but "it was just too far away to tell" if there was a weapon on it.

Three boats "stayed on one side of us," James said, while the other two "crossed our bow very close.... They came down our port side, turned around, came right at us at a high rate of speed."

The Navy ships increased speed and repeatedly radioed

the small boats.

That's when the radio threats were heard, James said.

"One of the transmissions was, 'I am coming to you,' and then, shortly after that, 'You will explode in a few minutes.' Whether it was coincidental or not, it occurred at the exact same time that these boats were around us and they were placing objects in the water, so I would say the threat appeared to be building."

The packages were placed in the water alongside the warships and ahead of them.

"I saw them float by," Adler said. "They didn't look that threatening to me."

Meanwhile, "We were going through our pre-planned response and our measured, very disciplined responses trying to warn them off before we had to take any lethal action," James said. "And, fortunately for everybody involved, they turned outbound before we got to the point where we needed to open fire."

Reporters asked several times how close the Navy came to taking action, but the officers would not attach a time or distance to their answers.

"We don't have a specific range," Adler said. "There is no magic number - if he crosses this line, we open fire." Rather, commanders assess the specifics of the situation, such as the maneuvers of the vessel.

"I think we did exactly what we are supposed to do," James said, "and I am very proud of the way the crews performed."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Newsweek
January 21, 2008

Periscope

4. Bothersome Intel On Iran

By Michael Hirsh

In public, President Bush has been careful to reassure Israel and other allies that he still sees Iran as a threat, while not disavowing his

administration's recent National Intelligence Estimate. That NIE, made public Dec. 3, embarrassed the administration by concluding that Tehran had halted its weapons program in 2003, which seemed to undermine years of bellicose rhetoric from Bush and other senior officials about Iran's nuclear ambitions. But in private conversations with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert last week, the president all but disowned the document, said a senior administration official who accompanied Bush on his six-nation trip to the Mideast. "He told the Israelis that he can't control what the intelligence community says, but that [the NIE's] conclusions don't reflect his own views" about Iran's nuclear-weapons program, said the official, who would discuss intelligence matters only on the condition of anonymity.

Bush's behind-the-scenes assurances may help to quiet a rising chorus of voices inside Israel's defense community that are calling for unilateral military action against Iran. Olmert, asked by NEWSWEEK after Bush's departure on Friday whether he felt reassured, replied: "I am very happy." A source close to the Israeli leader said Bush first briefed Olmert about the intelligence estimate a week before it was published, during talks in Washington that preceded the Annapolis peace conference in November. According to the source, who also refused to be named discussing the issue, Bush told Olmert he was uncomfortable with the findings and seemed almost apologetic.

Israeli and other foreign officials asked Bush to explain the NIE, which concluded with "high confidence" that Iran halted what the document describes as its "nuclear weapons program." The NIE arrived at this finding even though Tehran continues to operate uranium-enrichment centrifuges that many experts believe are intended to develop

material for a bomb, and despite the CIA's assertion that it had, for the first time, concrete evidence of such a weaponization program. Most confusing of all, the document seemed to directly contradict a 2005 NIE that concluded—also with "high confidence"—that Iran *did* have such a weapons program. Bush's national-security adviser, Stephen Hadley, told reporters in Jerusalem that Bush had only said to Olmert privately what he's already said publicly, which is that he believes Iran remains "a threat" no matter what the NIE says. But the president may be trying to tell his allies something more: that he thinks the document is a dead letter.

Wall Street Journal
January 14, 2008
Pg. 1

5. In Iran Reversal, Bureaucrats Triumphed Over Cheney Team

Rivalries Behind Iraq War Play Out in Risk Report; Bush Issues New Warning
By Jay Solomon and Siobhan Gorman

As President Bush arrives in Saudi Arabia today, America's Arab and Israeli allies have been buzzing about the recent sea change in Washington's perception of Iran. The December report by the U.S.'s top spy office stating Iran had abandoned its effort to build nuclear weapons was one of the biggest U-turns in the recent history of U.S. intelligence.

Behind the scenes in Washington, it marked a reversal of a different sort: After years in which Bush appointees and White House staff won out on foreign-policy matters, career staffers in the intelligence world had scored a big victory.

The authors of the Iran report -- career officials in the intelligence and diplomatic corps -- are among the same people who were on the losing side of the Iraq and Iran

debates during the first Bush term. In 2002, some argued that Iraq didn't have an active nuclear-weapons program. They were sidelined by the more-hawkish foreign-policy strategists on the Bush team.

Now, the more-cautious intelligence camp is grabbing the reins. The power shift can be seen in other areas where U.S. policy appears to be softening. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is supporting cultural exchanges and direct dialogue with Pyongyang. The White House recently invited a Syrian delegation to a Middle East peace conference. At the same time, longtime government career officials across Washington are taking on important posts once held by Bush loyalists.

In the case of the Iran report, the about-face was made possible in part by a 2004 restructuring that gave intelligence chiefs more autonomy. New procedures for vetting and authenticating reports also helped insulate analysts from White House involvement.

Critics of the report, including European and Arab diplomats and hawkish U.S. legislators and strategists, believe it is politically motivated payback. By focusing on new intelligence which reveals that Iran dismantled its weapons program in response to international pressure, they say, the authors are making a case for diplomacy rather than military action. Less prominent in the report is a second key finding -- that Iran is rapidly moving ahead to develop a nuclear-fuel cycle.

"This all smells of policy validation," says David Wurmser, who served as Vice President Dick Cheney's top Middle East adviser up until this September. "These guys were State Department bureaucrats....It is hardly surprising that they now use their new positions to try to prove they were right."

The Iran National Intelligence Estimate, as the report is called, has also complicated President Bush's approach to the Middle East. During the president's trip to the region this week, one task has been to reassure Arab and Israeli allies that the U.S. has a consistent policy toward Iran.

Yesterday, in Abu Dhabi, Mr. Bush sought to rally Arab states against Tehran, saying in a speech: "Iran's actions threaten the security of nations everywhere."

The United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, meanwhile, announced in Vienna yesterday that Iran had agreed to a new road map to resolve "all remaining verification issues" concerning its nuclear program within the next month.

The Iran intelligence report "really confused many people in the Gulf," says Bruce Riedel, a former Middle East expert at the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Council. "No one could understand what the hell we were doing."

Senior officials at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the umbrella organization that coordinates the U.S.'s 16 spy agencies and that oversaw the report, say payback wasn't a factor. They defend the report as a righting of the ship after the Iraq intelligence failures.

Sources Vetted

Hundreds of officials were involved and thousands of documents were drawn upon in this report, according to the DNI, making it impossible for any official to overly sway it. Intelligence sources were vetted and questioned in ways they weren't ahead of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Thomas Fingar, 62 years old, is one of the lead architects of the Iran report. A veteran State Department official, Mr. Fingar helped lead the office that argued in 2002 that evidence of Iraq's nuclear program was faulty. He is now

a senior official at the DNI.

Of the backlash against the report, Mr. Fingar says, "A lot of it is just nonsense. The idea that this thing was written by a bunch of nonprofessional renegades or refugees is just silly."

Tensions between career intelligence and diplomatic officers on one side, and the White House and Pentagon on the other, trace back decades. The White House and Pentagon have regularly challenged the loyalty and patriotism of the State Department's diplomats and linguists. State's focus on persuasion and negotiation, meanwhile, has landed it a reputation for softness and liberalism.

President Richard Nixon approached China behind the back of the State Department. Former Secretary of State George Shultz opposed what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal, in which the Reagan administration sold arms to Iran and diverted the funds to support anticommunist guerrillas in Central America.

The most recent conflict traces back to President Bush's first term when the development of U.S. policy toward the "axis of evil" -- Iraq, Iran and North Korea -- was still in its early stages. At the time, Mr. Fingar served as the deputy chief of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, or INR, crafting analysis for Washington's diplomatic corps.

A China expert and onetime gymnast, Mr. Fingar began his career as an academic at Stanford University and was the director of its U.S.-China Relations Program. His colleagues describe him as enraptured by the East, displaying in his office Asian art and photos of his younger days in East Asia.

He also developed a reputation for being laid back -- by State Department standards. When staffers are called to Foggy Bottom's

seventh floor, where the Secretary of State works, they tend to comb their hair and pause in front of the mirror before leaving their office. Mr. Fingar would often ascend jacketless and with his shirtsleeves rolled up.

In 2002, Mr. Fingar vigorously quizzed his analysts' assumptions on Iraq, according to people who took part in the process. He particularly liked running "red teaming" exercises where competing groups sought to expose flaws in the bureau's judgments. Mr. Fingar told top State Department officials, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell, what his analysts had concluded: Saddam Hussein didn't have an active nuclear-weapons program. In particular, they disputed evidence cited by the White House relating to Iraq's purchase of aluminum tubes, purportedly for use in making weapons-grade nuclear fuel.

Mr. Powell ultimately broke from his analysts' beliefs, arguing before the U.N. Security Council in February 2003 that Mr. Hussein was actively seeking a nuclear weapon.

Mr. Fingar's department's Iraq position, a lonely one, infuriated top Bush administration officials, say current and former U.S. officials.

The two sides clashed on other issues. One of Mr. Fingar's State Department colleagues, Vann Van Diepen, for example, repeatedly battled with John Bolton, the close ally of Vice President Cheney who served as the State Department's top counter-proliferation official at the time.

Big Battle

One big battle was over the export of technologies from China to Iran and other regimes that could be used in developing nonconventional weapons and ballistic-missile systems. Mr. Bolton considered China's action government-sponsored

proliferation and pushed for sanctions. Mr. Van Diepen disagreed, arguing that Beijing didn't have the ability to control all the players inside China, say U.S. officials who worked with both men.

Mr. Bolton says the rift grew so wide he designated a subordinate to monitor Mr. Van Diepen's work. Toward the end of President Bush's first term, the State Department began to shrink the scope of Mr. Van Diepen's responsibilities.

Now the National Intelligence Officer for Weapons of Mass Destruction and Proliferation for the DNI, Mr. Van Diepen is a co-author of the Iran National Intelligence Estimate.

Mr. Van Diepen declined to comment on the dispute with Mr. Bolton's office. His former boss at the State Department, John Wolf, says Mr. Van Diepen never sought to undermine Bush administration policy on weapons proliferation.

"Vann Van Diepen wasn't anti-President Bush, he was anti-John Bolton," says Mr. Wolf. "He didn't believe we could do things irrespective of the law and our treaty obligations."

With the reconfiguration of the intelligence landscape in late 2004, Mr. Fingar moved to the newly created DNI, along with John Negroponte, another career diplomat who became the spy agency's first director. Mr. Fingar became director of the National Intelligence Council, which coordinates the writing of all National Intelligence Estimates, or NIEs, among the U.S.'s spy agencies.

Mr. Fingar was tasked with implementing many of the reforms called for by Congress. This included putting new safeguards into the system to authenticate reports' sources and to prevent intelligence being cherry-picked to support previously developed theories. One of the Iraq NIE's biggest failures was that it drew

heavily on an Iraqi defector nicknamed "Curveball" who never met with American intelligence officials and later proved to be a fabricator.

New Systems

Under these new systems, officials from the U.S.'s principal spy agencies, such as the CIA and the National Security Agency, were required to compare every piece of intelligence they collected with how it was reflected in the report. They signed forms stating that the information from their sources was accurately reflected. Analysts also examined a half-dozen alternate explanations for the facts they had gathered to test their conclusions.

Another significant change, Mr. Fingar says, has been reevaluating "our judgments and the sourcing used in previous estimates," rather than just trusting the conclusions of the old intelligence reports.

Mr. Van Diepen, as a co-author of the Iran report, drew on thousands of documents and sources in writing the final estimate and cooperated closely with 20 other officials in the last stages, say people involved in the process. Representatives from all 16 spy agencies ultimately had to sign off on this final version. Outside experts, who were expected to challenge its conclusions, were given a day to analyze the report for flaws.

The result was that the White House was essentially locked out of the process. This marked a big change from the years leading up to the Iraq war, when Mr. Cheney and his top aide, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, made repeated visits to Langley to query analysts about their findings on Iraq's weapons capabilities.

Through the summer and fall of 2007, as rumors leaked, officials in Mr. Cheney's office and on Capitol Hill grew increasingly concerned about the report's possible conclusions, according to

people working at the White House and on Capitol Hill. White House and DNI officials say President Bush first got notice from DNI chief Mike McConnell in August that significant new intelligence had emerged on Iran.

DNI officials met with White House staff a week before the report's release to go over the sources behind their assessment. Intelligence officials involved in this process say it wasn't a forum to invite changes.

Knowing the report would probably leak, and given the importance of its conclusions, the White House decided to make public the main conclusions. Most of the report is still classified.

People in Vice President Cheney's office saw the Dec. 3 announcement as a death blow to their Iran policy. The report's authors "knew how to pull the rug out from under us," says a long-time aide to the vice president, referring to the way the key judgments were presented.

Few publicly question the underlying intelligence behind the report. But a number of critics are challenging the analysts' conclusions. Some counterproliferation experts and diplomats see Iran's efforts to develop a nuclear-fuel cycle as a more important assessment than the revelation that Tehran stopped seeking to develop actual weapons. They say once the fuel cycle is accomplished, weapons can be developed in a matter of months.

"The elephant that's in the room is being ignored," says Rep. Brad Sherman of California, the Democratic chairman of a House subcommittee on proliferation issues.

"You couldn't read the key judgments [of the report] and not assume that this was intended to change policy," says Mr. Bolton. "It shredded the Bush administration policy."

Mr. Fingar warns against judging the whole report based

on the two-and-a-half pages that were declassified. He says it is more than 140 pages long and has nearly 1,500 source notes.

As for Mr. Bolton's critique, "it didn't say what he wanted it to say, I guess," Mr. Fingar says.

USA Today

January 14, 2008

Pg. 2

6. Gitmo Should Close, Chairman Of Joint Chiefs Says

Prison's reputation has hurt image of U.S., Mullen says
By Associated Press

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba — The chief of the U.S. military said Sunday that he favors closing the prison here as soon as possible because negative publicity about treatment of terrorism suspects has been "pretty damaging" to the image of the United States.

"I'd like to see it shut down," Adm. Mike Mullen said in an interview with three reporters who toured the detention center with him. It was his first visit since becoming chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in October.

His visit came two days after the sixth anniversary of the prison's opening in January 2002. Mullen emphasized that a closure decision was not his to make and that he understands there are many complex legal questions the Bush administration believes would have to be settled first, such as where to move prisoners.

The admiral also noted that some of Guantanamo Bay's prisoners are deemed high security threats.

Mullen, whose previous visit was in December 2005 as head of the U.S. Navy, noted that President Bush and Defense Secretary Robert Gates also have spoken publicly in favor of closing the prison. Mullen said he is unaware of any active

discussion in the administration about how to do it.

"I'm not aware that there is any immediate consideration to closing Guantanamo Bay," Mullen said.

Asked why he thinks Guantanamo Bay, commonly called Gitmo, should be closed, and the prisoners perhaps moved to U.S. soil, Mullen said, "More than anything else it's been the image: how Gitmo has become around the world, in terms of representing the United States."

Critics, including Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross, have charged that detainees have been mistreated in some cases and that the legal conditions of their detentions are not consistent with the rule of law.

"I believe that, from the standpoint of how it reflects on us, that it's been pretty damaging," Mullen said.

He said he was encouraged to hear from U.S. officers here that the prison population has shrunk by about 100 over the past year, to 277. At one time, the population exceeded 600.

Hundreds of detainees have been returned to their home countries. Four are facing military trials after being formally charged with crimes. In June, Gates said some detainees are so dangerous they "should never be released."

Mullen's predecessor, retired Air Force general Richard Myers, was a defendant in a lawsuit by four British men who allege they were systematically tortured throughout their two years of detention.

On Friday, a federal appeals court in Washington ruled against the four men.

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Bush administration considered Guantanamo Bay a suitable place to hold those suspected of links to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, contending that U.S. laws do not apply there

because Guantanamo is not part of the United States.

Lawyers for the detainees have challenged that interpretation.

Los Angeles Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 1

7. U.S. Shifts Sunni Strategy In Iraq

Focus moves from neighborhoods to the parliament in an effort to get government jobs for thousands of men now working in local security programs.

By Peter Spiegel, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

BAGHDAD — Eager to cement the security gains of last year's troop buildup, the U.S. military has shifted its strategy from the streets to the corridors of power in a high-stakes effort to persuade Iraq's wary Shiite leaders to put thousands of predominantly Sunni men, many of them former insurgents, on the government payroll.

More than 70,000 members of mostly Sunni Arab groups now work for American forces in neighborhood security programs. Transferring them to the control of the Shiite Muslim-dominated government, as policemen and members of public works crews, has taken on a new urgency as American troops begin to withdraw, officials indicated in recent interviews, meetings and briefings.

The day-to-day commander in Iraq, Army Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, believes that the Iraqi government's reconciliation with onetime Sunni fighters represents the "primary driver of enhanced security" over the next six months, according to internal military planning documents seen by The Times.

"It's a big change," said a top Odierno aide, who spoke on condition of anonymity because such plans have yet to be made public. "It's a shift in the commander's intent."

So far, however, progress has been limited. Officials of Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's government, fearing the creation of a potential rival army, are resisting the move. U.S. military officials fear that opposition could send the former insurgents among the Sunni guard corps, known as CLCs, back into the battlefield.

"We've got a lull at the moment, an absolute lull in violence, but it could go anywhere next year, depending on how the current government reacts to it," Odierno's aide said. "One of our biggest risks are CLCs and which way they'll go."

The aide, like other U.S. officials, warned that the window of opportunity is narrow, and is dependent on the Iraqi government making the Sunni security groups, sometimes called Awakening Councils, part of the official government structure.

"If it doesn't embrace it, you could have the different Sunni Awakenings coming together as a Sunni army that tries to overthrow the government, pushing the country into civil war," the aide said. "It's possible."

The concerned citizens groups now serve as guards in areas where traditional security forces, such as the Iraqi army and police, are not present or are not trusted because of past sectarian abuses.

Not all are Sunnis. But experts on the staff of Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the overall commander in Iraq, estimated at the end of November that about 80% then under U.S. contracts were Sunni. Each gets paid about \$300 a month.

U.S. officials believe the concerned citizens groups have helped reduce violence by fighting extremists linked to the group Al Qaeda in Iraq and by redirecting insurgents.

Those officials, wary of creating parallel constabulary units that would rival government-controlled forces,

have ramped up efforts to persuade the Baghdad government to attach the concerned citizens groups to the Iraqi police or civilian work corps.

The move marks an important shift in U.S. efforts to bring rival Shiite and Sunni factions together. Since the start of the U.S. troop buildup, Pentagon officials have tried to get Sunni and Shiite officials to reconcile, a process that U.S. officials acknowledge has largely failed.

The Shiite-led Iraqi parliament approved a bill Saturday that would allow many members of Saddam Hussein's party, most of whom are Sunnis, to regain government jobs, but the measure was not related directly to the citizens groups. The law was approved only after months of debate, and other key reconciliation measures sought by the U.S. have languished.

Although not abandoning their efforts at the central government level, U.S. officials have made the hiring of Sunni guards the centerpiece of their new reconciliation strategy.

Last year, the Iraqi government cautiously supported a move to bring Sunnis who participated in the Awakening movement in Anbar province into the police force. But government resistance has stiffened as groups closer to Baghdad begin making the same transition.

So far, 1,730 members of the concerned citizens groups in the Baghdad suburb of Abu Ghraib have been allowed to become police officers. An additional 2,000 in the capital were accepted as members of the police force during the fall.

But even those limited numbers have been difficult for U.S. officials to clear through the Iraqi government.

"It's still an obstacle," said Army Col. Martin Stanton, the officer on Petraeus' staff who is in charge of the effort. "They're deeply suspicious of any

organized group of Sunnis, especially ones that were former insurgents."

Stanton said he would like to see most of the guards transferred to Iraqi control within the next eight months.

The move to set up concerned citizens groups sprang from the unexpected uprising of Sunni sheiks in Anbar against Al Qaeda in Iraq in 2006, when they approached U.S. military commanders to request permission to band together to protect their own neighborhoods.

Since then, Anbar has gone from the most violent province in Iraq to one of the quietest, and U.S. military officials have tried to replicate the model elsewhere. Local commanders used funds provided under a long-standing "emergency-response program" to pay the local groups.

Officials targeted cities and regions where Iraqi security forces did not exist, such as Arab Jabour, a largely Sunni rural area south of Baghdad, or were unwilling to actively patrol, like Baqubah, the war-torn capital of Diyala province to the north.

Mid-level U.S. officers acknowledge that many of the men being drafted into the CLC groups are former insurgents; one officer in east Baghdad marveled that he recently met over tea with CLC leaders who had been on his unit's insurgent target list just weeks earlier.

"Our 'concerned local citizens' -- people say it without any hint of irony," said one official. "One day, we remove the Al Qaeda patch and put on a CLC patch. Now they're the good guys."

But advocates of the program argue that such steps are inevitable, and in some cases desirable. They represent an acknowledgment that many Iraqis who were fighting U.S.-led forces were not hardened militants, but angry men looking to protect their neighborhoods from foreigners.

By becoming guards in previously unpatrolled areas in northern and central Iraq, the citizens groups have become a key stopgap, filling in security holes where U.S. forces have lacked the numbers to impose stability.

"The CLCs are bridging the gap, but unfortunately that can't last forever," said Army Brig. Gen. Joseph Anderson, Odierno's chief of staff. "The government of Iraq [must] embrace it, and that's a big battle right now: Are they going to embrace these under their own contracts?"

U.S. officials have acknowledged that the Iraqi police forces are not large enough to absorb all 70,000 of the men.

Odierno said last month that fewer than a quarter will become government security personnel. As a result, U.S. officials have begun a pilot program to develop a civil service corps to employ the men.

"We'll teach them skills, like repairing pipes, electricity, sewage," Odierno said. Still, officials aren't certain such programs can absorb the huge numbers of the concerned local citizens.

Approval from the central government represents a larger hurdle.

Odierno has had a series of lengthy and intense meetings with Iraqi officials to sell them on the idea and said last month that the two sides have agreed to a series of "very strict" requirements to temper Iraqi concerns.

Among them are restrictions on the citizens groups operating outside the control of the U.S. military or Iraqi government and a limitation on the number of group members who will be moved into the formal security forces.

Iraqi officials have raised concerns that citizens groups have been infiltrated by hard-core insurgents, a possibility U.S. officials have openly acknowledged.

"Are there people trying to infiltrate them? Yes," Odierno said. "But we can sort through that. The majority of them just want to be part of the government of Iraq. Before, there was no avenue for them to become part of the government of Iraq."

Times staff writer Tina Susman contributed to this report.

Christian Science Monitor
January 14, 2008
Pg. 1

8. Iraq Offensive: Clear Out Militants – And Stay

US, Iraqi operation in Diyala Province draws on a new counterinsurgency model.

By Scott Peterson, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

BAQUBAH, Iraq -- US forces are solidifying control over some of the most persistent militant strongholds of Al Qaeda in Iraq northeast of Baghdad, drawing on a new counterinsurgency model that has already seen some success in troubled Diyala Province.

The newly established US military control over what officers call the "breadbasket" – the lush Diyala River Valley 70 miles northeast of the capital – is only the first part of a multiprong strategy to boost numbers of Iraqi Army and police in the area and re-connect beleaguered local authorities to the provincial government and Baghdad.

"We [and] the Iraqi forces and government are committing ourselves to staying in this area, which has previously not happened," says Lt. Col. James Brown, executive officer of the 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division. "It's been go in, find Al Qaeda in Iraq, kill them, and then leave. Big surprise, they come right back."

This push across the fields and palm groves of Diyala is part of a four-province offensive called "Operation

Phantom Phoenix," which involves thousands of US and Iraqi troops going after Sunni militants that have been pushed out of Baghdad by the surge in US troops. The fall in violent attacks has been marred by a spate of car bombs and suicide attacks over the past two weeks in Baghdad; the US effort Thursday included the heaviest airstrikes since 2006 against some 40 targets south of the capital.

In Kuwait Saturday, President Bush conceded that until last year, "our strategy simply wasn't working," with Iraq riven by sectarian violence and Sunni and Shiite militants strengthening their grip in many areas. He said US forces were now on track to see a 20,000-troop drawdown by mid-2008, to the presurge level of 130,000. He warned it "would be premature" to suggest that the current offensive is a final push.

"Al Qaeda ... will continue to target the innocent with violence," Mr. Bush said. "But we've dealt Al Qaeda in Iraq heavy blows, and it now faces a growing uprising of ordinary Iraqis who want to live peaceful lives."

The surge was meant to lower violence to enable national reconciliation. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki claimed in recent days that "sectarian violence has ended" in Iraq, and that there was now political room for the "whole spectrum of the Iraqi people." But deep divisions remain. Still, parliament passed a law Saturday reversing key elements of the de-Baathification order, which should bring former bureaucrats, many of them Sunnis, back into the fold.

The increasing willingness of Sunni tribes, alienated by Al Qaeda tactics, to form US-backed paramilitary groups called Sahwa, or "Awakening," has been crucial. A six-month cease-fire by anti-US Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has also let the US concentrate on Sunni militants.

But in Diyala, long-term change will depend on the success of principles laid out in the Army's 2006 counterinsurgency manual, written by Gen. David Petraeus, the top US officer in Iraq. "The basic idea is that you surge the military forces, and then surge Iraqi government and services into the area after them," says a State Department representative working with the local Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT).

The sequence begins with the military taking the ground, then having Awakening and similar militias provide security. After that, effort is put into reconnecting levels of government so local officials know that their problems are being solved.

A similar pattern has had some success in the provincial capital of Baqubah, which a year ago was one of the most violent places in Iraq. Operation Arrowhead Ripper last summer began to take ground; Sunnis have since lined up in some areas to establish local militias.

The State Department official says that in November he heard complaints about schools – few books, bad desks. To him it spoke of real progress from a year before, when security issues were far more acute. In fact, Baqubah has achieved some normalcy.

"I'm fairly optimistic this [Diyala] plan will expand government reach," the official says. "Does this mean all people will say, 'Hey, we want to join the government'? No.... All this is reversible if the coalition disappears and security collapses."

Results have been mixed in the Diyala River Valley. US officers have not hidden their disappointment that many of the some 200 Al Qaeda in Iraq and other militants left before the offensive began Jan. 8, leaving behind six booby-trapped houses and 30 vehicle or roadside bombs.

In the first days of the

operation, the US military says, four insurgents were killed, four wounded, and 26 people detained. Of 18 weapons caches found, one underground facility included sleeping quarters, ordnance and bombmaking material, and detailed diagrams of a nearby US base. Six Americans died when a house rigged with explosives collapsed on them Jan. 9.

"You can kill AQI and insurgents all day – they'll always make more. In fact, you may be fueling the fire that creates them," says Lt. Col. Brown, from Russellville, Ark.

The broader aim is to remove the reasons people fight. But US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq have been struggling to achieve such results for 18 months, using the same template, with results largely depending on local authority reestablishing itself.

"It all goes back to one guy sitting in his shack, deciding what he's going to do today. Do I get up and work at the date processing plant today, and make \$10, or do I go find a 155mm artillery shell, put a blasting cap on it, wait for coalition forces to drive by, and get paid \$10," says Colonel Brown. "If he doesn't put the IED [in] ... contractors and NGOs are willing to ... dredge the canals and build the factories and put up the power line and build the school. You can see the cascading effect."

"It's about getting the Iraqi system to work," says US Army Maj. William Mandrick, a civil affairs officer from Rochester, N.Y. "It's not perfect, and it can be painful."

US officers estimate that 75 militants remain in the "breadbasket" area. Iraqi Army numbers there will double from 250 to 500, and police from zero to 75. "They are waiting to see if we do what we've done before, which is kick over some haystacks, find nothing, and then leave," says Brown. When they come out, he expects "they are going to realize this is different. They'll

see construction, stores opening, and ask: 'Why are there police driving on the streets?'"

New York Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 6

9. An Iraqi House Was Rigged To Kill American Soldiers

By Stephen Farrell

SINSIL, Iraq — The courtyard was a scene of devastation, strewn with medieval mud brick and modern cinder block, shattered alike by the explosion that killed six American soldiers and their Iraqi interpreter.

From the alleyway outside a day later, there was little sign that this was the house where the bomb exploded Wednesday, during an offensive to clear Sunni insurgents from the northern Diyala River valley, 60 miles north of Baghdad.

The same building complex had been cleared of explosives two weeks earlier, commanders say. But the ill-fated unit was apparently lured back to it by a villager who did not tell them that insurgents had sneaked back in later and rigged the house to explode.

A soldier who was there, Sgt. Joseph Weeren, described in a telephone interview on Sunday how, after he was pulled from the wreckage, he and his comrades pulled four badly wounded survivors, men "screaming in pain," from the rubble using only their bare hands and vehicle jacks.

"It was scary, because how do you move 1,000 pounds of concrete?" said Sergeant Weeren, 27, a sniper team leader from Winchester, Mass. "At that time that's all I was thinking."

"It was difficult because your buddy is screaming out in pain about his legs and to get him out, but we all pitched in and focused, and we jacked up that concrete," he said from an

American military base in Diyala where he was recovering from a severe concussion that he suffered in the initial explosion.

He said he believed that the explosion had been set off by a trigger wire hidden beneath a rug, which one of the soldiers stepped on.

"We saved who we could, and who we couldn't save they didn't feel a thing because concrete either fell on them or the bomb killed them," he said.

Sergeant Weeren was praised by commanders for his presence of mind because after the explosion, ignoring his concussion and blurred vision, he headed straight back into the village, alone, to arrest the shopkeeper who had directed them to the compound.

"I never felt like that in my life before," he said, explaining why he went after the shopkeeper. "I can't really describe it," adding: "I didn't have any body armor on. I didn't have a helmet. I was just so angry I went back after this guy, and I grabbed him."

The American military identified the six dead soldiers as Specialist Todd E. Davis, 22, of Raymore, Mo.; Staff Sgt. Jonathan K. Dozier, 30, of Rutherford, Tenn.; Staff Sgt. Sean M. Gaul, 29, of Reno, Nev.; Sgt. Zachary W. McBride, 20, of Bend, Ore.; First Sgt. Matthew I. Pionk, 30, of Superior, Wis., and Sgt. Christopher A. Sanders, 22, of Roswell, N.M.

All were assigned to the Third Squadron, Second Stryker Cavalry Regiment, based in Vilseck, Germany, which is attached for the Diyala operation to the Second Infantry Division.

House bombs are a common threat in Diyala, where American troops have found five since the start of last week's operation against Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, the homegrown Sunni insurgent group that American officials say is foreign-led.

Capt. David Gohlich, the company commander, said the

house had been used as an insurgent base for the last five or six months after it was commandeered from a wealthy Shiite family, which was forced out.

Speaking at the scene the day after the blast, Captain Gohlich said that the compound was cleared of bomb-making equipment by a different coalition force about two weeks before his platoon went in, but that the insurgents seem to have returned two or three days later and planted more explosives.

Sergeant Weeren said on Sunday that he and his colleagues did not know the background of the house before they went in. Asked if they could have done anything differently, he said: "I think about that. I don't know."

"It was an open compound," he continued. "We are the most experienced platoon. We made the call to go in. I can't go back on anything we have done."

Although he was farther south when the bomb exploded, Captain Gohlich, 29, from New Jersey, went straight to the scene.

"As a commander it's pretty much the worst thing that could happen," he said. "But there are a lot of other guys that are counting on you at that moment to do the right thing and keep them safe, so you do your best to stay disconnected, take care of everyone else and catch those who are responsible."

His squadron commander, Lt. Col. Rod Coffey, said he believed that the shopkeeper, who is now in custody, was involved. "I think he was complicit because what the locals were saying was that" the insurgents "used to stop by his store," he said.

He praised his men for their "enormous character," saying their performance had been "stellar." "That platoon and company did everything right," he said. "They were extraordinarily brave."

Los Angeles Times
January 14, 2008

10. Iraqi Political Factions Jointly Pressure Kurds

Onetime enemies sign a statement urging a political solution to the status of Kirkuk, and to regional oil contracts.
By Ned Parker, Los Angeles
Times Staff Writer

BAGHDAD — Several Shiite and Sunni political factions united Sunday to pressure the Kurds over control of oil and the future of the Iraqi city of Kirkuk, which Kurdistan wishes to annex to its self-ruled region in the north.

The budding front, which includes onetime enemies such as Shiite Muslim cleric Muqtada Sadr and former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's secular faction, believes Iraq should have a strong central government.

In contrast, the Kurds and the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, a major Shiite party, have championed a federal system that would give a limited role to the national government and greater powers to the regions.

Officials from the factions that signed Sunday's statement said they wanted to find a political solution to the status of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, which Kurds wish to annex by referendum. The Iraqi Constitution had called for a referendum to be held by the end of 2007, but that deadline passed and the factions now question whether it is still required.

The groups also protested any contracts signed by provinces or regions with foreign companies to develop oil fields. The regional government in Iraqi Kurdistan has signed such contracts in the last year, ignoring protests from Baghdad.

The factions indicated that the communique did not represent the formation of a new political bloc but did

commit them to promoting a strong role for Iraq's national government.

Usama Najafi, a lawmaker with Allawi's party, said at least 120 lawmakers in the 275-member parliament had endorsed the statement.

The communique was signed by representatives of nearly a dozen blocs, including the Turkmen, Yazidi and Christian minorities. The Shiite Islamic Dawa Party and supporters of former Prime Minister Ibrahim Jafari also signed the statement, in a move that could create greater stress on parliament's 85-seat leading Shiite coalition, which has already seen two parties defect.

The communique also revealed divisions in the 44-seat Iraqi Accordance Front, the main Sunni bloc, between parties that support and oppose Kurdistan's regional ambitions.

"We are thinking that Kurdish demands have grown larger and larger gradually... . Some of those demands are impossible to achieve, and this is a clarification for the Kurds that their demands are too large and irrational. They have to recognize their true size in the political process," said Sheik Walid Kraimawi, a member of the Sadr movement's political committee.

In a twist, the communique brings together both Allawi's faction and the Sadr camp in demanding a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops in Iraq. When he was prime minister in 2004, Allawi gave the green light for U.S. troops to fight Sadr's Mahdi Army militia.

"A timetable must be defined for the foreign forces to withdraw so that full independence and sovereignty would be achieved," said Najafi, of Allawi's group. "Of course not tomorrow; we are saying a timetable that depends on how the Iraqi forces are being prepared."

Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman said the Kurds were not surprised at the

statement and have considered such groups hostile to their goals.

But he cautioned that it was hard to see how their positions would translate into a cohesive bloc.

"It's not a coalition or front," Othman said. "It's just a communique."

Meanwhile, the U.S. military reported Sunday that an American soldier died after a bomb struck his vehicle in northern Iraq.

The attack, which occurred Saturday in Nineveh province, wounded four other U.S. soldiers, the military said.

At least 3,923 American troops have been killed in Iraq since the conflict began in March 2003, according to the independent website icasualties.org.

Times staff writers Raheem Salman, Saif Hameed and Caesar Ahmed contributed to this report.

Washington Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 1

11. U.S. Forces Finishing Al Qaeda Sweep In Diyala

By Richard Tomkins,
Washington Times

FORWARD
OPERATING BASE
NORMANDY, Iraq — U.S. military forces say they have largely completed combat operations and are working to consolidate their gains after a six-day push into the so-called "Bread Basket" area of Diyala province.

Clearing operations still are under way in the area, military authorities said, but day-to-day security will be handed over increasingly to Iraqi army and police units. A network of Concerned Local Citizens groups — an armed neighborhood-watch organization — also will be buttressed and expanded.

"Although decisive, the combat operations will likely not have as great of an effect as

the next phases," said Lt. Col. James Brown, executive officer of 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division.

He said efforts would focus on establishing stronger connections between villages surrounding the city of Muqadadiyah and Iraq's central government.

The Bread Basket, an area of about 110 square miles in the northern Diyala River Valley, had long been an al Qaeda stronghold and was dubbed the Islamic Republic of Iraq by the militants. Militants had been centered in Baqouba, the provincial capital about 35 miles northeast of Baghdad.

When the surge of U.S. forces pushed al Qaeda out of Baghdad last year, the organization retreated to Baqouba; when pushed out of Baqouba, it retreated to the Bread Basket, where villagers now describe having gone through a reign of terror.

"As we transition into the next phase, you will essentially see a planting of the Iraqi flag in the northern [Diyala River Valley]," Col. Brown said.

"You will start to see Iraqi army and Iraqi police, which up until this point had not patrolled in this area, and here shortly, you will see the linkage between the provincial leaders and the local leaders."

The push by at least seven battalions of U.S. soldiers, reinforced by three 5th Iraqi army divisions, began Tuesday under the name Operation Raider Harvest, which was part of a larger operation called Phantom Phoenix.

Leading the effort were the combat engineers of the 38th Engineer Battalion from Fort Lewis, Wash., who cleared the roads of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) so vehicle-borne infantry could push forward.

The lead vehicle in the convoy led by the 3rd Squadron, 2nd Platoon, of the 38th, was put out of action within five minutes of entering the first village. A 50- to

60-pound IED hidden under the road surface at a T-junction in Sinsil exploded when the heavily armored Buffalo rolled over a concealed crush-wire detonator. The four soldiers and one American reporter in the 40-ton vehicle escaped with concussive injuries.

Expected heavy fighting with al Qaeda militants in the Diyala River Valley, however, did not occur. Intelligence reports later indicated that many had fled farther north in advance of the operation.

It is thought that the insurgents were tipped off to impending action by the increase in helicopter and vehicle traffic to the largest U.S. base in the area, Forward Operating Base Normandy. There might also have been a leak from the Iraqi security forces.

By yesterday, the U.S. military said, four enemy fighters had been killed, four wounded and 24 terror suspects detained in the Bread Basket area. Thirteen explosive devices had been found and destroyed, as well as 10 vehicle-borne bombs and four IEDs planted in houses.

Six U.S. soldiers and their Iraqi interpreter were killed on Wednesday when a bomb in a booby-trapped house exploded shortly after they entered it. Four U.S. soldiers standing on the flat roof of the house were injured when it collapsed from the explosion.

Although the Army is transitioning to the holding phase in the Bread Basket, clearance operations are continuing. Late in the week, Marine engineers from Anbar province were rolling into Forward Operating Base Normandy to join in the hunt for more IEDs.

Newsweek
January 21, 2008

Periscope

12. In Diyala, A New Offensive

By Lennox Samuels

The GI's marched in

silence, placing their feet carefully to avoid tripwires that could detonate an IED. In the no man's land between Shakarat and Sinsil, small villages about 60 miles north of Baghdad, the only sounds that pierced the midnight darkness were the murmurs of platoon leader Capt. Travis Batty into his radio, and the crunch of boots hitting sand. The military's Operation Iron Harvest—a major offensive to drive Al Qaeda in Iraq from Diyala province—was underway, and the troops from Blackfoot Company were in the vanguard, tasked with securing the area for their comrades in the rear. I was along to watch.

Diyala province is the latest battleground in the fight against Al Qaeda, and since the operation began last week, at least nine U.S. soldiers have been killed. The insurgents holed up here remain tenacious, unleashing suicide bombers and planting lethal explosives that can blow anything off the road. And they've upped the ante. A severed head turned up last week in a deserted market in Shakarat, a mere 500 yards from the U.S. military's combat outpost. It was the 10th head discovered in two weeks—gruesome warnings of what will happen to anyone who helps the Americans. "They stuck the head of one of my brothers on the bridge close to the camp," a local farmer, Nazem Aziz Habib, told me as he walked by with his two children.

The idea behind Operation Iron Harvest was to kill or capture the approximately 200 Qaeda members who've been hiding out in the Diyala River Valley, an area known as the Bread Basket because much of the nation's produce is grown here. But Al Qaeda apparently got wind of the offensive beforehand; some locals say they were tipped off by Iraqi Army sources. The insurgents set booby traps, then disappeared.

As morning arrived, we set up camp at a large house in Sinsil. Inside, soldiers questioned a young man, Maad Khalaf Darweesh, about Al Qaeda's presence in the town. He seemed suspicious, coughing and sweating as First Sgt. Ken Brantley grilled him about a strange drawing. But it turned out to be the building's electrical grid, and the soldiers realized Darweesh was actually ill with a nasty cold. A medic gave him antibiotics, and gradually, the platoon relaxed. "Sit down over there so you don't get shot by snipers," a 22-year-old sergeant told me.

The calm didn't last long. A 50-pound IED rocked the house and sent a 25-ton Army vehicle bouncing into the air. Smoke billowed, and we took cover while the company rushed out to investigate. Inside the vehicle, four soldiers and a freelance reporter were injured. "It blew up right under my feet," the writer, Rick Tomkins, told me. "I was just holding my breath wondering if there would be another blast." The soldiers found no Qaeda operatives. Like phantoms, the culprits had slipped away yet again, with the soldiers of Operation Iron Harvest right behind them.

U.S. News & World Report
January 21, 2008
Pg. 24

13. For Haifa Street, A Welcome Calm

U.S. troops begin a quiet drawdown, hoping that locals don't notice

By Linda Robinson

BAGHDAD--One year ago, Haifa Street's high-rise apartments were the scene of some of the Iraqi capital's heaviest fighting. Today, the downtown buildings remain pockmarked from the snipers who shot down at U.S. and Iraqi troops whenever they came to clear the neighborhood. But there are many encouraging signs of the tentative peace that has come to much of Baghdad. Workers

reinstall floor-to-ceiling windows in the modern Finance Ministry building; many damaged high-rise apartments have been refurbished; commerce in several markets is resuming.

In the Alawi market, a teahouse is still missing part of its roof, but locals are back playing dominoes and billiards. Three elderly men, their heads swathed in traditional red-checked scarves, sit drinking *chai* and discussing the day's news. One of them says he feels "100 percent safe" in his neighborhood but is not yet ready to visit his sons, who live scattered around Baghdad. Asked what would make him feel safe enough to do that, he says, "We need to make sure the Iraqi forces are loyal. And we need the Americans to stay to make sure the terrorists do not come back."

But already, the first of the additional U.S. troops that were part of the Bush administration's one-year-old surge plan have left. One battalion has even been quietly pulled out of Haifa Street. The first of the five U.S. brigades scheduled to go home by July left last month, and some of the remaining troops have been moved north, where 60 percent of the attacks in Iraq are now occurring. The U.S. military has launched a new offensive--dubbed Phantom Phoenix--against the remaining al Qaeda-linked Sunni insurgent sanctuaries there.

Melting away. Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, who is in charge of daily U.S. military operations in Iraq, says, "We are not giving up anything we have secured." But the recurring theme of the Iraq war has been one of local progress that consistently dissolves when U.S. troops move elsewhere. To avoid repeating history, Odierno and Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, have recently revised the joint campaign plan to make the drawdown as gradual and invisible as possible. "We'll

take a little out of here, a little out of there," says Odierno. "You'll see that through the spring." The one exception, he adds, will be Anbar, the western province dominated until recently by Sunni insurgents. There, local groups have turned against al Qaeda in Iraq, allowing the U.S. military to plan to reduce its presence from a peak of 16 battalions in September down to six by May. "That's because violence is the lowest there of anywhere in the country," says Odierno. "More importantly, the Army and police levels are growing very well out there--which nobody would've predicted a year and a half ago."

In Haifa Street, Khalid Ismael, the local "mukhtar" or unofficial mayor of the Alawi market, is pleased by the sight of a vegetable stand stacked with gleaming eggplants, beets, and cauliflower. He encouraged vendors to reopen and argued with city hall to resume deliveries of rationed food and propane. "We see progress here every day," Ismael says. "Things are going so well that I went out drinking the other day." One particularly good sign was the recent arrest of the local Shiite militia commander, Hussein Hany. Even though the city's Sunni insurgents have largely left or stopped fighting, many neighborhoods remain under the sway of extremist Shiite gangs loyal to firebrand cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

Despite the relative calm, serious obstacles remain. A reduced U.S. troop presence will make it more difficult to maintain the visible security deterrent that has been so crucial. Lt. Col. Tony Aguto, the local U.S. commander, strolls the streets daily with his Iraqi Army counterpart, Lt. Col. Mahde Kadoom, a genial officer who first joined Saddam Hussein's Army in 1989. "We are trying to make people feel safe," says Kadoom. Electricity also remains in short supply. Aguto's unit is installing nine

generators to boost the daily supply from eight hours to 12. "What we need now," Ismael says, "is jobs, especially for the college-educated youth."

A new problem is brewing as well. Many Iraqis fled to the Haifa Street area from more violent parts of the city, and Aguto estimates that about 35 percent of the 150,000 residents are squatters. Now, a growing number of Iraqis who fled during the sectarian bloodletting are returning to claim their homes in what remains a mixed Sunni and Shiite neighborhood. The U.S. provincial reconstruction team has a legal expert to give advice, but, Aguto says, "it is the job of the Iraqi government to sort this out."

New York Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 6

News Analysis **14. Ex-Baathists Get A Break. Or Do They?**

By Solomon Moore

BAGHDAD — A day after the Iraqi Parliament passed legislation billed as the first significant political step forward in Iraq after months of deadlock, there were troubling questions — and troubling silences — about the measure's actual effects.

The measure, known as the Justice and Accountability Law, is meant to open government jobs to former members of the Baath Party of Saddam Hussein — the bureaucrats, engineers, city workers, teachers, soldiers and police officers who made the government work until they were barred from office after the American invasion in 2003.

But the legislation is at once confusing and controversial, a document riddled with loopholes and caveats to the point that some Sunni and Shiite officials say it could actually exclude more former Baathists than it lets back in, particularly in the crucial security ministries.

Under that interpretation,

the law would be directly at odds with the American campaign to draft Sunni Arabs into so-called Awakening militias with the aim of integrating them into the police and military forces. That plan has been praised as a key to the sharp drop in violence over the past year and as being the most effective weapon against jihadi insurgents like Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.

There has been mostly silence from American officials, who have pushed Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's government hard over the past year to ease restrictions on former Baathists as a sign of political reconciliation between Shiites and Sunnis. The two highest-ranking Americans in Baghdad, Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker and Gen. David H. Petraeus, were with President Bush in Kuwait on Saturday when the measure was passed. And a day afterward, officials were still putting off questions about it.

"We still have to go through it," said a United States Embassy spokeswoman, Mirembe Nantongo. "We're not going to comment at this time."

Col. Steven Boylan, General Petraeus's spokesman, said he had not seen a translation of the legislation and was uncertain whether his boss had.

According to a translated copy received by The New York Times, a whole new rung of former party members could be allowed back into government. Where the old de-Baathification law barred members of the top four of the party's seven levels, the new measure would bar three, theoretically allowing as many as 30,000 people back in. And a vast majority of the ones still excluded, who held top national- and regional-level jobs, would become eligible for pensions if they had not been implicated in crime or corruption.

But interpretations of the

measure's actual effects varied widely among Iraqi officials. In general, Shiite politicians hailed it as an olive branch to Sunni Arabs. But some Sunnis say it is at best an incremental improvement over the old system, and at worst even harsher.

"This law includes some good articles, and it's better than the last de-Baathification law because it gives pensions to third-level Baathists," said Khalaf Aulian, a Sunni politician who opposed the legislation. "But I don't like the law as a whole, because it will remain as a sword on the neck of the people."

"Maybe in the future they will use it to prevent anyone they like from keeping their job," he said.

The most extreme interpretations of the measure's effects actually came from Shiite officials. Some of them hailed it because it would ban members of even the lowest party levels from the most important ministries: justice, interior, defense, finance and foreign.

That would seem to preclude the government from keeping its promise to offer military and police jobs to the thousands of Sunni Arabs who have joined the Awakening groups.

Mr. Aulian, among other Sunni Arab politicians who opposed the measure, pointed out that the greatest risk could be that it would unravel successful efforts to draw more Sunnis away from the insurgency, perhaps toppling the country back into open sectarian conflict.

"Many Baathists hated the Baath Party, but they were part of it to have a job," he said. "By this law, we will push them into the insurgency."

But the proof of the measure will come in how it is applied. Even the old de-Baathification process did not achieve its goal of purging all of the former high-ranking party members from the government. The process lost

track of many and avoided prosecuting others, like the former interim prime minister, Ayad Allawi, out of political expediency.

Some officials pointed out that there was still room to interpret the legislation liberally, allowing more former Baathists in while still satisfying the pride of Shiites who have been dead-set against conciliation toward officials who worked for Mr. Hussein.

Sadiq al-Rikabi, a political adviser to Mr. Maliki, said the new bill was a result of compromises by both hard-line Shiites and Sunni Arabs.

One particular improvement, he said, was that de-Baathification cases would now be subject to judicial review, whereas the old de-Baathification committee's decisions were final. And the Council of Ministers would have the right to make exceptions to the law in order to serve the public interest. "Before, we dealt with Baath Party members as a group," he said. "Now, being a Baath Party member is not a crime by itself. If someone has committed a crime in the old regime, that accusation should be made in court. And all of the members can get a pension."

In the meantime, Iraqi legislators said Sunday that they were making progress on two more key benchmarks urged by the Bush administration: the approval of an oil revenue sharing law and the settlement of competing claims to the contested northern city of Kirkuk.

Several Iraqi political parties — including the one led by the cleric Moktada al-Sadr, along with the National Dialogue Front, a Sunni Arab group, and several independent and secular groups — said they had formed a coalition of at least 140 legislators, of 275 total, to work on the issues.

While they have yet to propose a specific plan, the unusual alliance stands opposed to Iraq's powerful

regional interests, including the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, which dominates the oil-rich south, and the Kurdish bloc, which has cut independent deals with foreign oil companies to exploit vast oil reserves in the northern region of Iraqi Kurdistan. Both groups favor more regional control of oil revenues and political power.

The sharing of oil revenues has been a major obstacle for Iraq's competing political groups, especially for Sunni Arabs in the western Anbar Province, which has little oil.

Salih Mutlaq, a member of the National Dialogue Front, said he hoped the coalition would promote nationalism.

"We are against creating regions," he said. "This bloc is against investment and oil contracting unless it is approved and consulted about with the central government."

Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish politician, took a dim view of the alliance and said he suspected that Mr. Maliki, despite his own party's agreement with the Kurdish bloc, secretly supported the coalition. "I think he indirectly participated in this alliance and encouraged it to make problems for the Kurds," Mr. Othman said. "Maliki is a double-faced man."

Reporting was contributed by Ahmad Fadam, Qais Mizher, Abeer Mohammed and Balen Y. Younis.

Parade Magazine
January 13, 2008
Pg. 14

Intelligence Report **15. Who's Left In The Coalition?**

Foreign troops have shrunk by 75%

When the U.S. invaded Iraq in the spring of 2003, we had 47,200 combat troops from three nations with us. In March 2004, there were 24,000 troops from 33 countries. Today, the number of foreign troops has dropped below 12,000,

according to the Brookings Institution's Iraq Index. That includes 4500 British troops, 2000 from the former Soviet Republic of Georgia and 1200 from South Korea. Other coalition members, such as Spain, Italy and Japan, left Iraq months or years ago. By this summer, the numbers could diminish by an additional 50%. Britain and South Korea are halving their forces, and Georgia is pulling out 1700 troops. The new prime ministers of Australia and Poland also have promised to remove all of their soldiers—600 and 900, respectively—which would leave the foreign troop strength under 6000. (Right now, the U.S. has about 160,000 troops there.) Says Brookings' Michael O'Hanlon: "The military mission in Iraq is increasingly just a U.S.-Iraqi enterprise." He adds that we can expect less help as time passes, "even given improvements on the ground and a new President."

National Journal's
CongressDailyPM
January 11, 2008

16. Gates Expected To Offer Few Changes In FY09 Budget Plan

The Pentagon's FY09 budget request marks Defense Secretary Gates' first real chance to set military spending priorities, but analysts do not expect to see a major shake-up in the department's longstanding plans for high-priced weapons systems.

Defense budget watchers agree that the budget, due on Capitol Hill next month, is more likely to continue trends from the first seven years of the Bush administration than to present a new spending strategy. Programs falling under the umbrella of military transformation, which former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld outlined years ago, will continue to dominate the procurement budget, they said.

Gates, who took over as Defense secretary in late 2006, "certainly has brought a new personality to the job," said Winslow Wheeler, a former Senate Budget Committee analyst who tracks military spending at the Center for Defense Information. But he added he is "not aware that anything ... is the slightest bit different."

Typically, major program cuts get leaked weeks before the Pentagon sends its budget to Congress. But it has been much quieter this year. "The silence suggests people are getting what they want," said Gordon Adams, former deputy OMB director for national security programs. "There could always be a surprise, but I'm sure not hearing any screams," he added.

Analysts cited several reasons for a largely status-quo FY09 budget request -- not the least of which is that the clock is ticking down on the Bush administration. "Typically, the biggest changes happen the first year or two," said Steven Kosiak, a budget analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

Gates has been focused on the Iraq war, leaving little time to reshape spending priorities to reflect his vision for the U.S. military. "Remember, when he first came in he said there were three issues he was going to address -- Iraq, Iraq, Iraq," quipped Jacques Gansler, Pentagon acquisition chief during the Clinton administration.

Several analysts suggested there will be changes "at the margins" to defense program budgets. A former Defense official said cuts are possible to some of the military's space programs and shipbuilding efforts that have been over cost and beyond schedule. But other programs that formed the core of Rumsfeld's "network-centric" transformation, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, will likely continue to get a boost. And special operations forces,

which have grown during the Bush administration, could receive boosts in their budgets, the former official said.

Last year, the Pentagon projected that procurement accounts would increase in real terms by 11 percent between FY08 and FY13. But in an analysis released last year, Kosiak questioned whether expected cost growth in military personnel and operations and maintenance accounts would undermine efforts to spend more on procurement.

Several analysts raised questions about the uncertain future of the hefty annual supplemental spending bills, which have significantly augmented the Pentagon's budget. With no wholesale cuts anticipated in the next request, difficult decisions on military spending might be punted to the next administration. "That's kind of my fear," Gansler said.

-- by Megan Scully

Long Island Newsday
January 13, 2008
Pg. 30

17. Voters In Uniform Watch From Afar

U.S. military serving overseas are closely following campaigns, saying next president will have major impact on their future

By Martin C. Evans

STUTTGART, Germany -- At Biddy Early's, a downtown Irish pub where American soldiers from the U.S. European Command gather for extramural pints of beer, two military men spoke about the approaching election season.

"I like Obama because he doesn't have the vested interest that some of the others have," said Air Force Capt. Tim Hollo. "I like Obama, I like Giuliani. He has a proven track record of cleaning up New York."

Jareth White, a former Army sergeant who intends to re-enlist now that an injury has healed, said no candidate has

won his support yet.

"With the euro beating the hell out of the dollar, what are they going to do to bring us back into the game?" he asked.

Far from the caucus rooms of windswept Iowa or the polling booths in snowy New Hampshire, soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines stationed abroad are paying close attention as the selection process for presidential candidates gets under way.

Many say concerns surrounding the war in Iraq and ongoing stresses on a military stretched thin has stoked an early interest in the process that will determine who will be their next commander in chief.

Personnel among the 70,000 U.S. troops stationed in Germany say their interaction with local residents and foreign news broadcasts have exposed them to issues and perspectives that often go less noticed by Americans back home, including the falling dollar, outsized U.S. consumption of the world's oil supply and the declining popularity abroad of American foreign policy.

"You can't continue the same old fight over abortion," Staff Sgt. Marshall Crawford, a Mississippian who works at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, the sprawling trauma hospital near Frankfurt that treats soldiers rushed from Iraq and Afghanistan. "Let's talk about what we can change, let's talk about China's deflated currency, global warming, oil prospects in the Arctic, tax reform. We want something fresh."

Soldiers interviewed abroad say they are following the campaigns with particular interest because they believe their fate will be determined largely by who wins the next election. Democratic candidates generally have stressed a quicker drawdown of U.S. troops. Republicans have stressed the need to stay the course.

"I've been in the Army 28 years. The decisions of every commander in chief since

Jimmy Carter have had a big influence on my life," said Army Col. Chip Lewis, a Mississippi resident stationed in Belgium who plans to vote by absentee ballot.

Polling of soldiers shows high levels of discontent with President George W. Bush and his handling of the Iraq war, even though more soldiers now say success is possible. An annual survey released Dec. 31 by the Army Times showed only 46 percent of its subscribers approved of Bush's decision to go to war, compared with nearly two thirds in 2003.

"So they are more optimistic about success, but you won't get a majority to say going to Iraq was a good idea," said senior managing editor Robert Hodiern. "And fewer will say Bush has handled his presidency well."

Lewis, who said he is likely to vote Republican, said several candidates have impressed him. He considers Arizona Sen. John McCain and Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee to be straight shooters and said New York Sen. Hillary Clinton appears to have a good grasp of the needs of the U.S. military.

Political scientists say military personnel stationed abroad could play a role in the general election. Military units designate a "voting officer," who reminds uniformed personnel that they retain their right to vote and provides them with information on obtaining absentee ballots. Texas and Florida, which between them have 64 of the 270 electoral votes a candidate needs to win the general election, are the home states of a disproportionately high number of personnel stationed abroad.

But the military's impact on the selection of party nominees will probably be limited: The early Iowa and Nevada caucuses do not allow absentee participation. And a November report by The Century Foundation, a public policy research group, said the push toward earlier primaries

this year will make it harder for soldiers overseas to return absentee ballots in time, further retarding voter participation among them.

Still, the interest is there.

Hollo, who is stationed at the Patch Barracks just outside Stuttgart, said he is looking for a candidate who will re-prioritize the mission of the U.S. military.

"I'm waiting for them to push foreign policy first and define where the military is going," he said.

White, who spent two years at Camp Victory in Iraq, agreed.

"None of the candidates have stepped up and said this is my vision, this is what I can do for my country," he said. "I'm still waiting for someone to speak to me."

Honolulu Star-Bulletin
January 13, 2008

18. Medical Care For Soldiers In Transition

By Gregg K. Kakesako

Forty-five minutes after Spc. Joseph Gentile was injured by a roadside bomb in Kirkuk, his parents in Ohio were notified of his condition by the 25th Division's 27th Wolfhounds Regiment.

Three days later, the Army flew his parents and two brothers from Cleveland to a hospital in Germany to be by his side while he recuperated.

"They liked that throughout my ordeal, they were kept in the loop," said Gentile, 21, who had deployed to Iraq in the summer of 2007 as a member of the 25th Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

Today, after being in a wheelchair for three months, Gentile is walking again and is one of 191 soldiers assigned to Schofield Barracks Warriors in Transition Unit.

More than 29,000 servicemembers have been wounded in action in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past six years, according to Pentagon figures, compared with fewer

than 500 during the 1991 Desert Storm campaigns.

Much of the care and attention Gentile and his family have received could in part be attributed to the criticism the Army received early last year that resulted in the development of a new medical action plan and the creation of Warrior Transition Units.

The Warrior Transition Office was established June 15, after the Washington Post revealed substandard patient care for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The newspaper detailed deficiencies including a confusing disability evaluation system and servicemembers in outpatient status for months and sometimes a year without a clear understanding about their plan of medical care.

Three months after these Warrior Transition Units were established at Army bases, the Government Accountability Office reported the units, including the one at Tripler, had significant shortfalls in critical positions.

However, Mindy Anderson, Tripler spokeswoman, said the GAO report was based on a projected patient load of 200 and not its current load of 191.

"Our current staff exceeds the staffing ratio of one squad leader to every 12 warriors; one case manager to every 18 warriors; and one primary care manager to every 200 warriors with 24 squad leaders; two supervisory case managers and 14 case managers; and one primary care manager currently, with another to begin Feb. 3 in anticipation of our numbers exceeding 200," she said.

Command Sgt. Maj. David Vreeland, the highest ranking enlisted soldier assigned to Tripler Army Medical Center's Troop Command, said Gentile could have requested assignment to any of the transition units in the Army after completing two months of hospitalization at Tripler. The

Army said there are 35 transition units taking care of 9,000 wounded and injured warriors.

Ninety-nine active-duty soldiers, Army National Guard, Army Reserve and civilians are assigned to the Schofield Barracks transition unit.

Each of the 12 squad leaders in the warrior transition unit is assigned 12 soldiers who either were wounded in combat or injured in training, Vreeland said. "All of these soldiers no longer can do their primary duty and we take them in until they are healed."

Besides a squad leader, each wounded or injured soldier is also assigned a primary care manager, usually a physician, and a nurse case manager. These three check on their assigned soldiers until they return to their units or transfer to the Department of Veterans if they leave the Army.

Brig. Gen. Steve Jones, who commands Tripler Army Medical Center, said the average stay for soldiers assigned to these transitional units is six months.

In the case of Army National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers, Vreeland said the Army tries "to get them as fit as they were before mobilization."

The level of care a soldier receives in the transition units depends "on his involvement with those in charge," said Sgt. Tony Wood, who lives with his family in Ahuimanu. "If you have a problem and it isn't fixed, it's because you haven't let somebody know what it is."

Wood is unable to continue his career in the Army as a military police officer because he is suffering from a traumatic brain injury following a roadside bomb attack in Iraq three years ago.

On July 27, 2005, as Wood was returning from a mission near the Iranian border, his Humvee was struck by three improvised explosive devices, with the first one being a penetrator type and the

other two shrapnel types.

"The blast immediately killed my driver and gunner," Wood recalled. "You couldn't find any traces of them and they were sitting just inches from me. I remember seeing the door on the driver's side just flapping in the wind, yet there was no one in the vehicle. I didn't see or hear or feel the blast.

"The Humvee had crashed into the median, setting off two frag grenades that we carried inside the truck with me still in it," Wood said.

He was in a coma for 45 days.

Recently, Wood was cleared by an Army medical board and will be allowed to remain in the service. He hopes to start a career as military police instructor or an investigator.

Gentile had been in the Army for only 18 months when he was injured June 20 while driving the lead vehicle in a four-truck convoy.

Two 130-mm mortars "tore off the whole front end of my Humvee," Gentile said.

Gentile still has a foot cast and he now has to put aside his dream of attending flight school and flying helicopters.

His leg injuries prevent him from remaining in the infantry, but he wants to remain in the Army.

While confined to a wheelchair, Gentile volunteered to work for Tripler's public affairs office, moving throughout the hospital taking pictures.

Patient-care practices at Tripler

Brig. Gen. Steve Jones, who commands Tripler Army Medical Center, said many of the warrior transitional program's key elements were practices already in use at Tripler. These included:

*Identifying patients before they arrived at Tripler and tracking them until they left the hospital.

*Assigning a case manager to a soldier before he or she arrives and who remains

assigned to the patient until he or she leaves.

*Establishing a deployment health center at Tripler to support all the needs of the deploying soldier and his or her family.

*Establishing a deployment health clinic for wounded and injured soldiers, and a family assistance center at Schofield Barracks.

Philadelphia Inquirer
January 14, 2008

19. Murder Suspect Seen In Louisiana

JACKSONVILLE, N.C. - The key suspect in the slaying of a 20-year-old pregnant Marine was spotted in Louisiana and could be headed into Texas, authorities said yesterday.

Marine Cpl. Cesar Armando Laurean, 21, was seen Saturday night at a Greyhound bus station in Shreveport, La., by several passengers, Onslow County Sheriff Ed Brown said. The bus Laurean was riding was headed to Texas, he said, but authorities did not know whether he continued on that route.

Federal officials said yesterday that they had issued a fugitive warrant for his arrest.

Authorities said Saturday that they had found what they believe to be the remains of Marine Lance Cpl. Maria Lauterbach and her unborn child in a fire pit in Laurean's backyard. Lauterbach vanished in mid-December, not long after she met with military prosecutors to discuss her April allegation that Laurean had raped her.

--AP

Air Force Times
January 21, 2008
Pg. 10

20. Long Wait For Justice

Held responsible for airmen's deaths for more than a decade, general feels vindicated
By Erik Holmes

Terry Schwalier has lived in the shadow of Khobar Towers for more than 11 years.

The June 25, 1996, terrorist bombing in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 airmen under Schwalier's command remains a defining moment in his life and career. "It's deeply embedded in my mind," Schwalier said from his home in Knoxville, Tenn. "Every moment, every second is very, very clear."

Perhaps now the retired fighter pilot can finally put those memories to rest.

The Air Force Board for the Correction of Military Records ended a long-running dispute Dec. 20 by deciding that holding Schwalier responsible for the bombing by effectively stripping him of his second star back then amounted to an injustice. The board ordered that his second star be reinstated, and found that he should have been promoted to the rank of major general effective Jan. 1, 1997.

After years of maintaining he had done all he could reasonably have been expected to do to protect his airmen — a conclusion shared by three of the four government investigations into the attack — Schwalier said he feels that justice has finally been done.

"Yeah, sure, I feel vindicated," he said. "I would have preferred to have this all take place while I was still wearing Air Force blue, but it didn't. Based on where we're at ... I do feel vindicated. I feel relieved. There's as much vindication as I think there can be at this time."

But Schwalier insists that his quest for redemption was about more than his good name or his second star. The issue was the standard to which commanders ought to be held, and the precedent set by making him the scapegoat for the attack.

"When the government tells a commander to take troops into harm's way, there's a risk that precious lives are going to be lost," Schwalier

said. "To me the standard [should be] how can the commander be reasonably expected to perform with the information he has at hand."

The board agreed.

In a Nov. 19 memo obtained by Air Force Times, the board wrote: "He implemented all identified force protection steps that he could, took steps to resource those that required resourcing and acted ... to have the remaining addressed."

'This stinks'

No one could have predicted this result back in July 2005, when Schwalier ran into attorney Michael Rose at a conference at the Air Force Academy. The men had both graduated from the academy in 1969, and they knew each other through the lacrosse team.

Schwalier had recently received what he thought was a final rejection from the board in his request to have his promotion to major general reinstated. He was disappointed and thought that was the end of it.

Rose said that as Schwalier explained the strange twists and turns of his quest for vindication, he knew something wasn't right.

"I just knew that this stinks," he said.

Three months before the Khobar Towers bombing, Schwalier had already been nominated by President Clinton and confirmed by the Senate to receive his second star.

Four investigations were conducted after the bombing, in which a sewage truck packed with explosives blew up near the dormitory, which housed around 100 airmen. Three of the investigations exonerated Schwalier, according to the board's Nov. 19 report, but the first one made public said the general was at least partially to blame.

In response to that report, then-Defense Secretary William Cohen removed Schwalier's name from the list

for promotion to major general.

Many in the Air Force thought Schwalier was unfairly made the scapegoat. In fact, then-Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald Fogleman resigned in protest over Cohen's decision. But Schwalier's career was effectively over, and he retired from the Air Force on Sept. 1, 1997.

The landscape changed after the Sept. 11 attacks, when most Americans began to grasp the extent of the threat of Islamic terrorism. Schwalier said he felt the time was right to take another look at commanders' culpability in terrorist attacks.

In April 2003, he petitioned the corrections board, arguing that Cohen had violated promotion procedures by removing him from the promotion list, and that holding him accountable was unjust.

The board found in August 2004 that "an administrative error was made" and Schwalier had, in fact, been promoted to major general on Jan. 1, 1997, even though he never pinned on the rank. Joe Lineberger, director of the Air Force Review Boards Agency, approved the decision on October 2004, acting on the authority of then-Air Force Secretary James Roche.

But more than 10 months later, Lineberger reversed his own decision. He wrote that his action was based on civilian Defense Department lawyers' advice that the board's decision was outside its authority and that the Defense Department had the final say.

'Abuse of authority'

As Schwalier recounted his tale to Rose during that chance meeting at the academy, Rose was dumbfounded. "I didn't know exactly why this was illegal," he said, "but I was immediately confident it was."

Rose offered to look into the case and represent Schwalier free.

During the next two years, he spent hundreds of hours in his Summerville, S.C., law

office researching the relevant regulations, statutes and case law. He came to a startling conclusion.

"This was the first time in history a Defense Department lawyer had ever interfered with a decision of the Air Force Board for the Correction of Military Records," he said. "This is abuse of authority. ... It's not fair to the entire United States military to have civilian political lawyers interfering in a process that's been clearly set up by Congress to give relief to people in the military."

Rose submitted Schwalier's second application for correction of his records Sept. 24, arguing that civilian lawyers have no authority to overrule the Air Force board, and again making the case that holding Schwalier responsible for the attacks was an injustice.

The board, in its Nov. 19 memo leading to the official Dec. 20 decision, did not decide on the issue of Defense Department authority, but ruled in Schwalier's favor based on the claim that holding him responsible was an injustice.

"To me," Schwalier said, "the decision now kind of sends the message to commanders [who] are sent into harm's way that their performance will be measured against a firm but a fair standard, and that their Air Force leadership will uphold that process."

Schwalier stands to receive a substantial amount of back pay, in part, because his retirement date was retroactively changed from Sept. 1, 1997, to Feb. 1, 2000. He said he does not yet know how much he will receive, but it is safe to say it will be six figures.

Schwalier said he is trying to process his emotions now that his story has such an unexpectedly happy ending.

"At this point, it's still a little overwhelming," Schwalier said.

"Over such a long time you spend so much time thinking about that tragedy and

what we felt was unfair and unjust, and now we're just looking forward to seeing what's next."

Baltimore Sun
January 14, 2008
Pg. 1

21. Begging, Borrowing To Help Our Soldiers

With more than 1,000 Md. National Guard troops due home soon, resources to ease the transition are scarce

By David Wood, Sun reporter

WASHINGTON--More than a thousand Maryland National Guard troops are due to return from Iraq this spring, but essential programs to help ease them into civilian life are underfunded and in disarray, according to Maryland National Guard and U.S. officials.

The Pentagon has resisted funding efforts by Maryland and other states that have sought to avoid problems experienced by previously returning National Guard soldiers, including nervousness, inappropriate anger, sleeplessness, family disputes, marital problems and alcohol abuse.

That leaves the Maryland Guard scrambling to find the volunteers, donations and its own patchwork funding to help reorient soldiers from the dangerous, high-adrenalin battlefield to the joys and stresses of home, family and schools or civilian jobs.

The Maryland Guard's reintegration program is intended to help soldiers recognize whether they have problems and to know where to get help. It includes careful health assessments of the returning soldiers, and a series of seminars and workshops on everything from legal and tax problems to parenting skills, veterans benefits, marriage counseling and anger management.

The Maryland Guard already runs these programs on a small scale, but meeting the anticipated bulge of soldiers

returning this spring will be difficult.

"We are operating on a shoestring, begging and borrowing and trying to scrape together money," said Lt. Col. Michael Gafney, the Maryland National Guard flight surgeon who manages Maryland's reintegration programs for returning soldiers.

Seemingly at his wits end, Gafney, who operates out of a shabby one-story building in Edgewood, said half in jest that his latest funding brainstorm is to ask organizations and corporations to "sponsor" groups of soldiers to ensure they get the assistance they need.

Weeks earlier than expected, soldiers of the Maryland National Guard's 158th Cavalry Regiment are due to begin arriving at Fort Dix, N.J. for demobilization March 2, Guard officials confirmed. The headquarters troops of the 58th Brigade Combat Team are scheduled to follow April 1, and the 175th Infantry Regiment starting April 29th, according to current plans.

After five years of war, the military has realized that it needs to make more effort to help returning soldiers than it has in the past. National Guard troops are hit even harder than active duty soldiers because they are separated upon demobilization from the comrades with whom they have developed deep bonds.

They will have "a hard time readjusting," said Laura Copland, Maryland's director for behavioral health disaster services. "There's such a culture shock when they come back. They are asking for real coping skills."

A new Army study, reported Nov. 14 in the Journal of the American Medical Association, said that 42 percent of returning Guard soldiers needed mental health treatment. It said many of them fail to seek help either because care was unavailable or from fear that their problem would

be reported in their military records.

Untreated mental health problems tend to manifest themselves later in troubled marriages, family disputes, alcohol abuse and job tensions. A third of National Guard soldiers who return to college drop out during their first semester, Maryland Guard officials said, and one in five plan to separate or divorce.

Anticipating such problems, the Maryland Guard plans to hold reintegration seminars at 30, 60 and 90-day intervals after the soldiers return, both to help soldiers and to train community-based volunteers.

All this costs money - to pay soldiers' expense of attending, to rent space for the workshops, to pay speakers and the medical personnel who perform health assessments. In a similar program, the Minnesota Guard spent about \$852 per soldier, Minnesota officials said.

The Pentagon has refused for the past two years to fund such programs, Defense Department officials said.

The National Guard Bureau, the Pentagon office which represents all the state National Guard units, estimated that it would cost \$73 million a year for reintegration programs in all 50 states.

Congress last fall passed legislation demanding that the Defense Department fully support the programs. That measure is in the 2008 defense budget, vetoed by President Bush Dec. 28 for unrelated reasons. Even so, the bill provides no money for reintegration programs.

"The federal government should participate in the funding of these programs, there is no doubt in my mind," said Erin Thede, a National Guard Bureau official involved in the reintegration program. "There's a lot of politics involved in making this happen," she acknowledged.

"It would not shock me to

hear them say they have to study the program before they put in the money," said a frustrated senior National Guard Bureau official who asked not to be identified.

A Defense Department spokesman, Army National Guard Lt. Col. Les' Melnyk, would say only that funds for the reintegration program "are on hold."

To fill the void, Maryland Guard officials hope to receive as much as \$800,000 in state funds. But the money won't be available until the state's fiscal year begins July 1, Guard officials said.

Lt. Gen. Bruce Tuxill, adjutant general of the Maryland National Guard, said that given Maryland's own budget problems, he was pleased that "the governor and lieutenant governor are both very firmly committed" to the Guard's reintegration program.

"We are doing a federal mission," Tuxill said, referring to the Guard's deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The cost "should not be borne by the state entirely."

Tuxill and other state officials said they are doing their best to meet the needs of the returning troops, finding state and local money where they can and making use of community volunteers, including clergy, psychologists and psychiatrists, teachers, nurses and others who are working with small groups of soldiers who returned previously.

Many volunteers come through the Maryland Defense Force and such organizations as Pro Bono Counseling, a statewide organization that provides free services.

"We are a community-based organization," said Tuxill, "and we have always found strength in the community."

The reintegration programs will be held, Guard officials promise, but perhaps not as originally envisioned.

They had hoped to hold

the sessions at a comfortable hotel where soldiers and their families could meet as groups or individually with counselors, clergy and others, and where day care can be provided.

"These soldiers went out and fought for us," he said.

"Now why can't we find them someplace nice?"

New York Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 10

22. Error By Allies And 2 Clashes Kill 15 In South Of Afghanistan

By Abdul Waheed Wafa and Taimoor Shah

KABUL, Afghanistan — Two NATO soldiers, two Afghan soldiers and 11 Afghan police officers were killed in separate clashes in the volatile southern region of Afghanistan, officials said Sunday.

A statement from NATO announced the deaths of two alliance soldiers on Saturday without giving their nationalities. The Associated Press reported Sunday that the Netherlands Defense Ministry said Dutch troops had killed two of their own in Oruzgan Province in southern Afghanistan. Separately, the Dutch said they had killed two allied Afghan soldiers that they mistook for enemies, according to The Associated Press.

In other parts of southern Afghanistan, Taliban guerrillas attacked a police checkpoint on Sunday morning in the Maiwand district of Kandahar Province. Taliban fighters in three taxis stopped at the checkpoint at 5 a.m. and opened fire, killing 10 police officers, said a policeman who survived the attack but did not want his name published.

Ismatullah, a resident of the Maiwand district, said, "At early morning, I heard shooting and later I found out the check post had been attacked," adding, "I don't know the exact number of the casualties, but I

saw a few dead bodies were carried away by police."

In Helmand Province, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives in the house of a regional police commander, killing a police officer. Six other people, including two children, were wounded.

The provincial police chief, Muhammad Hussain Andiwal, confirmed the suicide attack and said the attacker struck when guards tried to stop him from entering the house.

"A policeman along with the attacker were killed, and two policemen and four civilians including two children were wounded," Mr. Andiwal said.

Violence in southern provinces of the country continues before what Afghan and NATO forces expect will be another winter lull. Taliban guerrillas have decreased their attacks because of winter cold in the last five years. The Taliban hard-line government was toppled by the American-led coalition in 2001.

Abdul Waheed Wafa reported from Kabul, and Taimoor Shah from Kandahar.

USA Today
January 14, 2008
Pg. 7

23. Many Afghans Still Living In Dark

Electricity in short supply, despite aid

By Jason Straziuso, Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Gul Hussein was standing under a pale street lamp in a poor section of eastern Kabul when the neighborhood went black.

"As you can see, it is dark everywhere," the 62-year-old man said. He said his family would light a costly kerosene lamp for dinner that evening. "Some of our neighbors are using candles, but candles are expensive, too."

More than five years after the fall of the Taliban — and

despite hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid — dinner by candlelight remains common in the Afghan capital. Nationwide, only 6% of Afghans have electricity, the Asian Development Bank says.

In Kabul, power dwindles after the region's hydroelectric dams dry up by midsummer. This past fall, residents averaged only three hours of municipal electricity a day, according to USAID, the American government aid agency. Some neighborhoods got none.

Electricity was meager under the Taliban, too, when Kabul residents had perhaps two hours of it a day in fall and winter. Supply has since increased, but not as fast as Kabul's population — from fewer than 1 million people in the late 1990s to more than 4 million today.

"Life takes power," said Jan Agha, 60, a handyman from western Kabul who recalled how the city had plentiful power during the 1980s Soviet occupation. "If you have electricity, life is good; but if there's no electricity, you go around like a blind man."

Some in Kabul do have electricity: the rich, powerful and well-connected.

Municipal workers — under direction from the Ministry of Water and Energy — funnel what power there is to politicians, warlords and foreign embassies. Special lines run from substations to the favored, circumventing the power grid. International businesses pay local switch operators bribes of \$200 to \$1,000 a month for near-constant power, an electrical worker told the Associated Press anonymously for fear of losing his job.

Ismail Khan, the country's water and energy minister, dismisses allegations of corruption as a "small problem."

"The important thing ... is that in six months all of these power problems will be solved,

and everyone will have electricity 24 hours a day," he said.

India, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on new power lines to import electricity from Uzbekistan. Though the line from Kabul to the Uzbek border is in place, a 25-mile section in Uzbekistan has not yet been built.

Initially, Uzbekistan supported the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. But the Uzbek government no longer views America as a friend, ever since U.S. leaders criticized the country's human rights record when government-backed forces massacred peaceful demonstrators in 2005.

Even when the Uzbek line is completed, Afghanistan can no longer expect the 300 megawatts originally envisioned, said Rakesh Sood, the Indian ambassador here.

"We know we'll get significantly less," he said.

President Hamid Karzai, in a national radio address last fall, said he discussed with President Bush the country's need to produce its own electricity.

Some efforts have run afoul of the continuing Taliban insurgency. A new U.S.-financed turbine for a hydroelectric dam in Helmand province is a few months away from being installed because of the "lack of permissiveness in the environment," said Robin Phillips, the USAID director in Afghanistan, using a euphemism for the spiraling violence there.

More than \$100 million is needed to upgrade Kabul's antiquated distribution system, and it remains unclear who would foot that bill.

Christian Science Monitor
January 14, 2008

24. A Bid For Better Military Relations With China

High-level meetings are part of

Admiral Keating's trip this week, following a flap over Hong Kong port visit by USS Kitty Hawk.

By Gordon Lubold, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON -- US military officials are in China this week for their first high-level visit there since an international flap in November in which Beijing refused to allow US warships into a port for a long-planned Thanksgiving visit.

The incident baffled Washington and further complicated US relations with the Chinese military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). But that's only one of many issues for military officials as they work to create clearer lines of communication between the two militaries – generally perceived to be a weaker relationship than the diplomatic or the economic ones.

Adm. Timothy Keating, commander of US Pacific Command, and James Shinn, a newly minted assistant secretary of Defense for the region, left Saturday for a week-long trip to China. Their visit will include high-level meetings in which the US aims to better understand the PLA's decisionmaking process and to try to answer the Pentagon's broader questions about China's rapid military buildup and its intentions toward neighboring Taiwan.

But the elephant in the room may be a series of incidents last fall after the PLA refused to allow the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk and its accompanying ships into the Hong Kong port for a planned Thanksgiving visit. The PLA said it was a "misunderstanding," and a day later agreed to allow the ships in. But the Kitty Hawk had already departed, US officials say, disappointing more than 300 family members of American sailors who had flown there to celebrate the holiday with their loved ones.

Earlier that week, China refused safe harbor during a storm to two American minesweepers, the USS Patriot and the USS Guardian – in violation of international maritime agreements.

The moves may have been a way for China to show its displeasure after President Bush awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet whom China sees as a separatist, some analysts say. If so, they say, it's one more sign of China's willingness to use the military relationship with the US for political purposes.

It's not clear American officials will ever get to the bottom of Chinese motivations. When Admiral Keating and Mr. Shinn meet with Chinese military officials, Keating will try to get past it, but the incident is likely to come up.

"His goal is to get beyond that," says an official with US Pacific Command who didn't want to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue. "He may ask the question, but he doesn't want to dwell on that."

Mysterious motives

Problems with port visits are symptomatic of larger questions about why China's military does what it does. China has built more ships and submarines – at a pace faster than the US could build them, members of Congress have noted – and last year it unveiled a sleek jet fighter, called the Jian-10, capable of firing precision-guided missiles.

But the top concern of American officials is China's intentions toward Taiwan. The US is committed to the defense of Taiwan, which split from China in 1949, in the event Beijing decides to invade the country to take it back.

That's all the more reason to improve the military relationship, says the Pacific Command official. "It makes sense that we get the mil-to-mil relationship caught up to the economic and diplomatic

relationships," says the official. "We still have concerns, and that's part of reducing the miscalculation."

A missile buildup

Meanwhile, as China prepares to host the summer Olympic Games, the US sees the country as a strategic military competitor – and perhaps a growing threat. China appears to be gunning for regional superiority at the very least, expanding to 900 the number of short-range ballistic missiles opposite Taiwan, but it is also developing an intercontinental-range ballistic missile that suggests an interest in attaining broader influence.

Another US concern is that the Chinese have reportedly been selling fast boats to the Navy of Iran's Revolutionary Guard that are similar to, if not the same as, those used in last week's encounter with US warships transiting the Strait of Hormuz near the Persian Gulf. Diplomatic officials are concerned about China's sales of the boats to another country whose intentions regarding the US remain unclear.

Many believe the "mil-to-mil" relationship cooled after a 2001 incident in which a US Navy reconnaissance plane was forced to land on Hainan Island after colliding with a Chinese fighter. Two dozen sailors on board were held for days before being released.

Daniel Blumenthal, a senior analyst at the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank in Washington, says despite that, US military officials continued to quietly engage China. Still, he adds, the China is signaling that it has a military to be reckoned with.

Mr. Blumenthal is not optimistic that US military officials will gain much insight into China's military decisionmaking, because the country is typically reluctant to share much.

"I don't see much hope for a friendly and substantive

mil-to-mil relationship," he says.

Mr. Shinn, a China expert who was sworn in to his new post Thursday, told Congress last month he is as perplexed by China's military actions as anyone. "The problem that we have is divining their intent," he told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "That's one of the reasons for the great ... care and vigilance with which we have to deal with the Chinese military."

Atlanta Journal-Constitution
January 14, 2008

25. Scores Of Militants Die In Raid On Army

Hundreds of Islamic militants attacked a Pakistani military base in Lhada, near the Afghan border, sparking fighting that killed between 40 and 50 insurgents in some of the deadliest clashes in weeks in the lawless region, the army reported Sunday.

Boston Globe
January 14, 2008

Pakistan

26. Poll Highlights Mistrust Of Leader

ISLAMABAD - Nearly half of Pakistanis surveyed suspect that government agencies or government-linked politicians killed Benazir Bhutto, according to an opinion poll, highlighting popular mistrust in the country's US-allied president ahead of elections next month. Her political party and family members have accused the government of failing to provide her with sufficient security, and some have alleged that elements within President Pervez Musharraf's government may have been involved. Musharraf has denied any role in the slaying.

--AP

Chicago Tribune
January 13, 2008

27. Official Seeks More

Security For U.S. Base

By Tribune news services

WARSAW, POLAND - Washington needs to provide more security for Poland if it wants Warsaw to host a U.S. missile defense base, the Polish defense minister said in remarks published Saturday.

Bogdan Klich, who will go to the U.S. on Tuesday for talks on the program with Defense Secretary Robert Gates, said a base would expose Poland to new threats, chiefly from terrorists, and it would be "very difficult" to persuade Poles to support the program without more security measures.

"We believe that the injection of American funds into modernization of our armed forces would balance the risk to our security linked to the construction of the base," Klich said in the Dziennik newspaper.

Washington says the base will protect the U.S. and Europe from threats.

Moscow Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 4

28. Georgians Back NATO Membership

By Associated Press

TBILISI, Georgia -- More than 70 percent of Georgians who took part in a nationwide referendum said they wanted the country to join NATO, according to results released Friday.

The plebiscite was held simultaneously with the Jan. 5 presidential vote in which Mikheil Saakashvili won his second presidential term.

The Central Election Commission said 72.5 percent of those who cast ballots in the referendum said they supported Georgia's accession into NATO. The turnout was 58.9 percent.

"We expected such results," Georgy Baramidze, minister for European integration, said in televised comments. "They show that we

have support of majority of the population."

NATO member states have supported Georgia's hopes of joining the Western alliance.

Also on Jan. 5, Georgians approved a referendum to move up parliamentary elections from late 2008. A total of 69.8 percent of those who cast ballots voted for holding early parliamentary elections in the spring.

Washington Post
January 14, 2008
Pg. 19

Fine Print

29. A Look Back Reveals Forward Thinking

By Walter Pincus

Insights still worth pondering today are contained in a 33-year-old top-secret Special National Intelligence Estimate called "Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons." The 50-page assessment was released in declassified form by the CIA last week with some 40 others in response to Freedom of Information Act requests.

The Aug. 23, 1974, document contained some fairly accurate findings and predictions. It reported that Israel "has produced nuclear weapons," and that India, which had conducted "peaceful" nuclear weapons tests, would probably "proceed to fabricate weapons covertly." It added: "An Indian decision to proceed with an overt weapons program on any scale will be one factor inclining some other countries to follow suit."

Enemies seeking nuclear weapons would become a motivation for "neighbors or potential antagonists" to join the race for nuclear weapons, the NIE predicted, adding: "The strongest impulses will probably be felt by Pakistan and Iran."

The estimate also

accurately put Taiwan among the top prospects to seek a nuclear weapons "option" because its program was run largely by its military. The report estimated that Taiwan needed another five years before it would be "in a position to fabricate a nuclear device."

As a result, the United States applied pressure on Taiwan's government after 1974 to halt its program. But it was not until 1986, when a CIA-recruited agent inside the nuclear facility disclosed what was still going on, that the Taiwanese weapons effort was dropped.

A less accurate prediction was that South Africa, in 1974, was "of more concern in the proliferation context as a potential supplier of nuclear materials and technology than as a potential nuclear weapons power."

The assessment added: "South Africa probably would go forward with a nuclear weapons program if it saw a serious threat from African neighbors beginning to emerge." Then the assessment went awry. "Such a serious threat is highly unlikely in the 1970s," it said.

The South African apartheid government already had felt growing international pressure against its position, and by 1974 then-Prime Minister John Vorster had authorized a weapons program. A nuclear test was prepared for 1977 but delayed when discovered by a Soviet satellite. The program slowed, and it was not until the 1980s, when Cuban troops were in Africa, that then-Foreign Minister Pik Botha disclosed publicly that his government had the ability to build nuclear weapons.

Another 1974 prediction -- that Argentina was "vigorously" pursuing a small nuclear program that "probably will provide the basis for a nuclear weapons capability in the early 1980s" -- has turned out to be half true.

Buenos Aires announced in late 1983 that for more than five years it had secretly been developing a gas-diffusion enrichment facility capable of producing slightly enriched uranium. But another part of the 1974 estimate seems to have been borne out -- that strong international pressure to stop nuclear weapons elsewhere, such as in Brazil, would lead Argentina away from having weapons of its own.

One analysis that contained disagreements among intelligence agencies is worth noting, in light of today's situation in Asia. The CIA, the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Army's intelligence arm all believed that Japan "would not embark on a program of nuclear weapons development in the absence of a major adverse shift in great power relationships which presented Japan with a clear cut threat to its security."

On the other hand, the heads of Air Force and Navy intelligence, both of which had bases in Japan, said there was "a strong chance that Japan's leaders will conclude that they must have nuclear weapons if they are to achieve their national objectives in the developing Asian power balance." They thought such a decision could be made by Tokyo "in the early 1980s."

Japanese leaders didn't make that move at the time, but those concerns of three decades ago have been raised more recently as North Korea has moved toward developing nuclear weapons.

Another noteworthy conclusion from the 1974 document: "Terrorists might attempt theft of either weapons or fissionable materials" that would be "useful for terror or blackmail purposes even if they had no intention of going on to fabricate weapons."

Washington Times

January 14, 2008

Pg. 4

30. USO Donations Up 50% Since 2007

1.5 million offer troop support
By Wendy Schibener,
Washington Times

An estimated 50 percent increase in donations to the United Service Organizations since 2007 shows that support for U.S. troops in Iraq has not dwindled since the onset of the war.

Although the USO still is calculating last year's donations, the Arlington-based nonprofit projects a budget of more than \$37 million for 2008.

"This response from the public is gratifying," said John Hanson, senior vice president of marketing and communications for the USO.

The USO, which began its operations during World War II, aims to help boost the morale of U.S. troops abroad through donations and volunteers. It uses the donations, which primarily come from private citizens, to help establish USO centers, where U.S. troops stationed overseas have access to amenities such as free Internet service and housing assistance.

"For the soldiers to be able to go someplace that is a comfortable, clean, nice place to be and is supported by American individuals and not by the government is really a great thing," Mr. Hanson said.

The donations also fund celebrity tours and concerts that entertain the troops overseas. The USO holiday tour last month featured performances by comedian Robin Williams and singer Kid Rock.

Such programs will continue this year, Mr. Hanson said.

The USO is planning to have more than 60 tours this year, with the month of January booked with appearances by rock bands Yellowcard and Third Day. Players from the National

Football League is expected to visit the troops several times this year.

The concerts and guest visits provide the troops with a much-deserved break, USO officials said.

"The USO receives e-mails all the time from parents of soldiers saying 'thanks for taking care of my child,' " Mr. Hanson said. "Service members constantly thank us for being there, for having these concerts when they had a rough day."

Troops stationed in areas where the USO doesn't have service centers also receive similar shows of support.

New programs, such as "USO in a Box," provides troops with packages that contain computer games, books, musical instruments and phone cards. Such programs are also funded by donations.

The USO's success shows that support for the troops does not diminish.

"The support for our troops continues to grow each year," Mr. Hanson said. "We have over 1.5 million active individuals helping the USO."

DeAnn Malone first became involved with the USO as a tribute to her father who served in the Vietnam and Korean wars.

"What I do is for the men and women who represent us in the armed forces," said Miss Malone, a volunteer with the USO for more than three years. "As long as they're there, I'll be there."

The USO recently opened new USO centers in Colorado, New York and Texas, and it is getting ready to expand overseas. "The USO will grow as fast as the military will allow it," Mr. Hanson said.

Wall Street Journal
January 14, 2008
Pg. 6

31. Airbus To Raise Ante In Bid For Military-Tanker Deal

By August Cole

Airbus will announce today that it will produce commercial freighter jets alongside Air Force tankers in Mobile, Ala., if it wins a hotly contested defense contract this year, according to people familiar with the situation.

Airbus parent European Aeronautic Defence & Space Co. is teamed with Northrop Grumman Corp., of Los Angeles, in an attempt to break Boeing Co.'s lock on the air-to-air tanker-jet market with the Air Force. Throughout the Cold War, U.S. fighter and bomber jets hooked up with Boeing tanker jets to refuel, but the planes are now older than most of the pilots who fly them. The contract for the next generation of tanker jets calls for 179 planes, valued at about \$40 billion.

The timing of today's announcement is important and nearly certain to prompt a pointed response from Boeing because it is so close to the awarding of the tanker contract. The Air Force is expected to make a decision on the contract in the coming weeks. Air Force officials have said the contract will be awarded to the team that produces the best airplane and that political maneuvering won't sway their decision.

Such moves are common in the aerospace industry, particularly when a company is embarking on an important sales campaign or focusing on a market for its products. Airbus is setting up an assembly line for single-aisle airplanes in China, where the government plays a big role in choosing airplanes in that growing market.

The tanker contract is important because the winner could also have a leg up on future tanker contracts. The stakes are high for EADS because this is its strongest foray into the U.S. defense market, the world's biggest in terms of budget.

Reflecting the political stakes of the award as well as the potential local economic

impact, Airbus has assembled a group of regional supporters, many of whom will be at an event in Mobile today. Among those expected to attend are Alabama Gov. Bob Riley and Alabama lawmakers Sen. Jeff Sessions and Rep. Jo Bonner.

By adding another type of aircraft to the final-assembly line in Mobile, Airbus hopes to hold down costs and operate the plant more efficiently. The additional work also means about 300 more jobs would be needed in addition to the 1,000 associated with the tanker assembly, according to a person familiar with the situation. Northrop Grumman and EADS believe work on the plane would involve 25,000 people in 49 states.

Building the tanker alone would mean producing about one aircraft a month on the Mobile line, but adding freighter work would lift the rate to four planes a month, according to the person familiar with the situation. Airbus has a backlog of 66 jets for the freighter version of the A330 jet, on which it is basing its tanker design. Boeing's tanker is based on the 767 jetliner, which has 52 unfilled orders.

Assembling the plane's components in the U.S. gives EADS ammunition against critics who contend that U.S. military pilots shouldn't be piloting a European plane in such a critical role.

But at a time when defense contracts produce fewer jobs, Congress is expected to enter the fray once the Air Force taps either Boeing or the Northrop Grumman-EADS team. Each team repeatedly has touted the economic and employment benefits of its program while claiming the other has exaggerated its case.

Buying new tankers is the Air Force's top priority for reasons beyond the aging fleet. The contract is a test for the Air Force's ability to acquire big weapons systems without controversy or legal problems.

Recent contract awards

have been protested by the losing parties, requiring the Government Accountability Office to determine whether the government followed its own rules and criteria. The Air Force says it has taken pains to make sure the contest is open and fair.

--Daniel Michaels
contributed to this article.

Financial Times
January 14, 2008

32. US Will Push Ahead With Arms Sale To Saudi Arabia

By Daniel Dombey and Simeon Kerr

The Bush administration will move ahead with a high-profile arms sale to Saudi Arabia as early as today, as part of a \$20bn package of deals with the Gulf states.

The Gulf is gearing up to sign a raft of military contracts after the US last July concluded military assistance agreements with Saudi Arabia and other regional states, as part of what Condoleezza Rice, secretary of state, said was an effort to "bolster forces of moderation and support a broader strategy to counter the negative influence of al Qaeda, Hizbollah, Syria and Iran".

At the time the administration disclosed no details of the deals, which are together thought to be worth up to \$20bn (€13.5bn, £10.2bn). It has since notified Congress of individual agreements, including a \$9bn sale of Patriot missiles to the United Arab Emirates and a \$1.63bn missile sale to Kuwait.

So far it has limited its announcement of deals with Saudi Arabia to smaller transactions.

The US had delayed the announcement of the sale of bomb guidance kits, known as Joint Direct Attack Munitions, to the kingdom because of misgivings in Congress over whether the equipment could be used against the US or Israel.

But a senior administration official travelling with President George W. Bush said a formal notification to Congress could come today. Congress would then have 30 days to decide whether to object.

Movement on the deal comes on the heels of another big contract signed over the weekend between Boeing and Gulf Air of Bahrain, home to the US's Fifth Fleet.

Commercial ties between the Gulf and France will also come into focus this week during a regional tour by Nicolas Sarkozy, France's president, and a retinue of industrial leaders.

As well as defence co-operation, Mr Sarkozy will be hoping to cement trade links with the usual battery of energy, infrastructure and aerospace accords.

He has pledged French help in developing civil nuclear power in the region and is expected to sign a co-operation agreement with the UAE, which is determined to accelerate the development of its nuclear power capability. Areva, Total and Suez have joined forces to help the UAE government establish the groundwork for the eventual construction of two reactors.

However, people close to the subject say it could take years to put in place the necessary security, training and operational expertise required before a firm contract for a nuclear reactor could be signed.

--Additional reporting by Peggy Hollinger and Ben Hall in Paris

Wall Street Journal
January 14, 2008
Pg. 12

33. The Lessons Of Iraq

By Erik Swabb

While the improved security situation in Iraq is changing views about the chances for success there, one common belief has remained unchanged: that the war is

eroding U.S. military capabilities.

It is true that repeated deployments have caused considerable strain on service members, equipment and our ability to respond to other contingencies. These problems, however, only tell half the story. The Iraq war is also dramatically improving the military's understanding, training and capabilities in irregular warfare. Since this is the preferred method of Islamic extremists, the experience in Iraq is transforming the military into the force required to help win the Long War.

The blunders of the early years are well-known. Trained for conventional warfare, the Army and Marine Corps were unprepared for the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq. Commanders emphasized killing or capturing insurgents, not securing the population as counterinsurgency doctrine emphasizes. U.S. units were stationed on large bases and didn't develop the critical relationships with local leaders that only come from living among the people.

When units did interact with Iraqis, the interaction ranged from fruitless patrols in Humvees zipping through town to draconian operations that detained scores of innocent people. The Sunni insurgency only grew in this environment, attracting al Qaeda and spurring the growth of Shiite militias.

After a costly learning process, the military increasingly "gets it" when it comes to irregular warfare. The Army and Marine Corps published a new counterinsurgency manual that legitimized the radically different strategy that the Iraq War required. Pre-deployment training now includes realistic scenarios that test units' ability to build relationships with local leaders and partner with host-nation forces.

Commanders, from the small-unit level to the general ranks, increasingly understand

that population security, political reconciliation and economic development create legitimate government, which saps insurgents' strength. As a result, conventional forces are now performing counterinsurgency missions at a level that many experts thought impossible.

My old unit returned from Iraq last spring after serving in a city in Anbar Province. As a mechanized reconnaissance company, its traditional mission focused on scouting for Soviet-style armored forces. The unit's performance in Iraq more closely resembled that of the Green Berets.

Soon after occupying its forward outpost, the company met heavy insurgent attacks. But it did not over-react with mass detentions and other alienating tactics. Instead, the Marines took a patient approach to win the support of the population and eject the extremists hiding among them. They partnered with Iraqi police, established a pervasive security presence throughout the city, and worked with local leaders to improve basic services, governance and the economy. Such tactics used to be rare, but are now increasingly the norm, thanks to Gen. David Petraeus's dogged emphasis on seeing counterinsurgency conducted by all units.

The Sunni tribal uprising that's driven al Qaeda from Anbar Province and Baghdad wouldn't have occurred without U.S. forces grasping the complexities of irregular warfare. Iraqi Sunnis rejected the oppressive version of Islam that al Qaeda imposed -- but feared the consequences of resisting. By showing a willingness to help, U.S. troops presented a more trustworthy and less-threatening partner than al Qaeda, a remarkable achievement considering the vast religious and cultural differences between Americans and Iraqis.

U.S. commanders reached agreements with tribal leaders

to accept their members into local security forces and establish combat outposts among the populace. Knowing that their families were safe from reprisals, the tribes gained the confidence to go after al Qaeda. Now U.S. officials are considering whether to adopt a similar model for Pakistan's Northwest Frontier.

It remains to be seen whether the new counterinsurgency strategy will lead to a peaceful, democratic Iraq. Success ultimately depends on the ability of Sunnis and Shiites to overcome decades of mistrust and antagonism. But the current approach has created an opportunity for political reconciliation, as Sunnis have demonstrated that they reject al Qaeda's campaign of terror against Shiites. The new strategy is also helping to prevent the establishment of an al-Qaeda safe haven in Iraq -- and in this sense, it has already proven its worth.

The strains on the military are real. However, overemphasis on the "eroding" capabilities of the armed forces belies the incredible emergence of an irregular warfare capacity in the world's greatest conventional military.

This hard-fought transformation faces resistance from advocates of the status quo in the military, and thus is easily reversible without political support. Such support is something Democrats and Republicans should be able to agree on.

Mr. Swabb served in Iraq as a Marine infantry officer.

New York Times
January 14, 2008
Pg. 25

34. Afghans, Report For Duty

By Ronald E. Neumann

Washington--THE security situation in Afghanistan is bad at the moment, as NATO-led forces face a growing Taliban resurgence. There are 40,000

foreign troops there now (including 14,000 from the United States), but that is not enough to maintain control of villages all over the country. The Afghan Army is slowly growing, in both size and competence, but it is still too small to protect a frightened, war-weary population.

To better the situation, the United States has recently made it a priority to improve the training of local policemen in Afghanistan, district by district. Corruption has been an enormous problem among police departments, which are often controlled by local warlords and militias. So we are working to train both rank and file policemen and their commanders. But even if this strategy is successful, it will take years, and we may not have that much time. It makes no allowance for complicating events -- a collapse of security in Pakistan, for example.

We are creating more battalions for the Afghan Army as fast as possible. But it takes time to train senior officers and staff. Time is also needed to build the mobility and technological sophistication required to compensate for the Afghan Army's small size.

A better strategy would be to institute a draft in Afghanistan. A draft would make it possible to gather a much larger military force, and far more quickly, around the core professional force already in place.

President Hamid Karzai and the Afghan Parliament are likely to embrace a draft as a national response to the present threat from the Taliban. Afghanistan has a long tradition of having a draft. It's true there would be obstacles: the old draft registers no longer exist, and it would not be acceptable today to exempt certain tribes, as once was done. Also, the Afghan government would need to find a way to pay the new force. (Historically, Afghan draftees were paid almost nothing; they served as a duty.) But Afghans

can find solutions to these problems.

History suggests it would be possible to organize the new, large force quickly. During the Korean War in the 1950s, the United States helped build a 700,000-man army in a nation with a population only about two-thirds that of Afghanistan. In the Greek civil war in the 1940s, we helped build a Greek security force of 182,000 soldiers in two years. These armies were not as sophisticated as today's forces, and they did not require new body armor, high-tech communications equipment and armored Humvees. But they were sufficient to overcome threats greater than those Afghanistan now faces.

An enlarged army would strengthen Afghanistan's central government, thereby diminishing the power of the often corrupt local police departments. The Afghan Army has a good officer corps respected by the Afghan people.

The insurgency is already being fought mostly by small army units. Rather than build new battalions, we could simply add more platoons and companies. This would reduce the need to train additional senior officers and it would make it possible to promote the good officers we have already identified.

Once the draft began, foreign trainers would still be needed. So it would be important to challenge our NATO partners to play a larger role in training the new troops. But the numbers of trainers needed would actually be smaller than the number of foreigners battalions we currently need -- but do not have -- from NATO.

The United States should lead the way in providing additional trainers. We will have the forces we need for this as the surge in Iraq ends. In setting the example, we may well inspire the NATO nations to see how adding trainers now could enable them to reduce

their forces later.

If we, along with NATO and other participating nations like Australia and New Zealand, begin helping the Afghans plan now, it may be possible to start training new draftees by late 2009, almost two years from now. The timing is not ideal since the extra forces are needed right away, but this is the fastest possible way of solving the security problem in Afghanistan.

Ronald E. Neumann, the president of the American Academy of Diplomacy, was the American ambassador to Afghanistan from 2005 to April 2007.

Miami Herald
January 14, 2008

35. No Plan To Fight Taliban, Al Qaeda

By Robert Weiner and John Larmett

Under the radar screen of the tragic assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto lies a major cause for the resurgence of al Qaeda both in Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan. Afghanistan now supplies 92 percent of the world's heroin-producing opium, and 36 percent of illicit opiates exported from Afghanistan transit through Pakistan en route to Europe, Asia and the United States. These figures make Afghanistan and Pakistan the No. 1 exporting and transit nations in the world for the opium used for heroin.

Bad money circulates among bad people. With the exception of 2001, when the Taliban strictly enforced a moratorium on poppy cultivation with such harsh tactics as beheadings, opium poppy cultivation has been steadily increasing. The U.S. military, afraid to disrupt the economies of U.S.-friendly Afghanistan and Pakistan, has turned a blind eye rather than attempt to eradicate the drug trade. Opium production on our watch has increased 33

fold from 185 tons in 2001 under the Taliban to 6,100 tons in 2006.

Block drug trafficking

The resurgence of the Taliban is closely linked to the opium industry. They use Afghanistan's opium industry and Pakistan's transit corridor as a source of funds as well as an avenue to gain the allegiance of the local people, particularly those discontented with the U.S. and NATO-supported governments of Hamid Karzai and Pervez Musharraf. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., accurately reported on the Senate floor when he unanimously won an amendment in September 2006 expanding counternarcotics assistance to Afghanistan (later stripped in conference by Republican leaders and the administration), "The Taliban generates roughly 70 percent of its income through the production and sale of opium."

Far from blocking drug trafficking by the Taliban and al Qaeda, Pakistan has actually negotiated a truce with rebels in the frontier areas of the northwest, who have ties to the Taliban and al Qaeda, to mutually cease hostilities. This, in effect, gives them *carte blanche* to strengthen and grow the illicit crops that fund them. It didn't even work as a peace deal. Since the signing of the Waziristan Accord on Sept. 5, 2006, attacks in both Pakistan and Afghanistan have intensified. Cross-border raids have significantly increased, and NATO forces have repeatedly engaged in pursuit across the Pakistan frontier.

Bhutto, before she died, told CNN, "The Taliban and al Qaeda have regrouped in Pakistan."

Act on the facts

Pakistan's radical Islamic fighters, who were evicted from Afghanistan by the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, have intensified a ruthless campaign that has consumed Pakistan's tribal areas and now affects its major cities. The insurgents have enhanced their ability to

threaten not only Pakistan but Europe and the United States as well. Richard Clarke, the counterterrorism chief for former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton said, "If I had thought that six years later al Qaeda would be stronger than it was then, I would not have believed on 9/11 that was possible. Bin Laden is alive and well."

Pakistan is fast evolving into the same drug-funded chaos, financing al Qaeda, that neighbor Afghanistan has already become. By refusing to block the drugs, we are funding our worst enemies, who showed on 9/11 that they want us dead and will do anything to achieve that objective. It's time for us to act on, not hide from, the facts.

As the leader of the Afghan State Department desk in *Charlie Wilson's War* said of our Afghanistan policy more than 20 years ago, "There is none." That is still true today, for both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the very areas where bin Laden and al Qaeda are surviving and flourishing, and possibly are centered, more than six years after they attacked us on 9/11, isn't it time for a plan?

Robert Weiner was public affairs director for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy in the Clinton administration. John Larmett, senior policy analyst at Robert Weiner Associates, was foreign affairs legislative assistant to Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash.

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Pg. 21

36. It's Not About Iran

By Shibley Telhami

As President Bush travels through the Middle East, the prevailing assumption is that Arab states are primarily focused on the rising Iranian threat and that their attendance at the Annapolis conference with Israel in November was motivated by this threat. This assumption, reflected in the

president's speech in the United Arab Emirates yesterday, could be a costly mistake.

Israel and the Bush administration place great emphasis on confronting Iran's nuclear potential and are prepared to engage in a peace process partly to build an anti-Iran coalition. Arabs see it differently. They use the Iran issue to lure Israel and the United States into serious Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking, having concluded that the perceived Iranian threats sell better in Washington and Tel Aviv than the pursuit of peace itself.

Many Arab governments are of course concerned about Iran and its role in Iraq, but not for the same reasons as Israel and the United States. Israel sees Iran's nuclear potential as a direct threat to its security, and its support for Hezbollah and Hamas as a military challenge.

Arab governments are less worried about the military power of Hamas and Hezbollah than they are about support for them among their publics. They are less worried about a military confrontation with Iran than about Iran's growing influence in the Arab world. In other words, what Arab governments truly fear is militancy and the public support for it that undermines their own popularity and stability.

In all this, they see Iran as a detrimental force but not as the primary cause of militant sentiment. Most Arab governments believe instead that the militancy is driven primarily by the absence of Arab-Israeli peace.

This argument has been a loser in Washington, rejected by many and not taken seriously by others. The issue of Iran gets more traction inside the Beltway.

Last year, King Abdullah II of Jordan delivered an address to a joint session of Congress. His focus was not on Iran or Iraq -- or even the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi

refugees his small country is painfully hosting. In urging American diplomacy, his message was clear: "The wellspring of regional division, the source of resentment and frustration far beyond, is the denial of justice and peace in Palestine." This address was hardly noticed in our press. In contrast, when the king highlights the Iranian threat to his American visitors, everyone listens.

One does not have to accept the view that Palestine explains all regional ills to acknowledge the king's central concern. Either he genuinely meant what he said or he believed it was so central a matter to his public that he needed to use this chance to address Congress to appease his constituents. (Three-quarters of Jordanians and other Arabs have ranked Palestine as their "top issue" or "among the top three" in their priorities for five years in a row.)

President Bush needs to listen. The war in Iraq has increased Saudi influence in the region, while America's Iraq troubles and its confrontation with Iran have weakened the U.S. position. America now needs Saudi Arabia more than the Saudis need Washington.

To be sure, there are many common economic and security interests. But in the end, the American presence in the Persian Gulf, which helps provide security for Arab governments, cannot be used as a lever. U.S. forces are there to protect American interests, not the local governments; a threat of withdrawal is not credible. If one adds the increased economic power that comes with the substantial cash flow generated by \$100-a-barrel oil, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Cooperation Council states have the potential influence that comes with being one of the top creditors of the United States.

And even though Gulf Arab governments need the

U.S. military umbrella for their security, their publics view the United States as a far greater threat than Iran. It is a challenge for these governments to have to continually depend on an America whose foreign policy is rejected by their own publics and whose record in recent years has been more of failure than of success.

Confronting Iran does not solve their dilemma. Arab-Israeli peacemaking does. Most Arabs identify successful American peace diplomacy as the single most important factor in improving their views of the United States.

When Saudi and other Arab representatives decided to attend the Annapolis conference, they hoped it would help Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert deliver the kind of visible concessions that would empower Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and dissuade Palestinians from supporting Hamas. President Bush sounded optimistic in Jerusalem. But Arab trust of speeches is low, and tangible benefits, particularly removal of Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank and a freeze on Israeli settlements, have not materialized. Increasing Arab skepticism about peace prospects is one reason they are hedging their bets by defusing tensions with Iran.

In making his case for confronting Iran, Bush is likely to get polite nods from Arab leaders. Don't mistake that for an embrace of American policy. What they need above all is for the United States to succeed in mediating Palestinian-Israeli peace -- not dismiss their peace calls as a fig leaf for some deeper desire for confrontation with Iran.

The writer is Anwar Sadat professor for peace and development at the University of Maryland and a nonresident senior fellow at the Saban Center of the Brookings Institution.