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Articles from subscriber only sites are available on request. Révolutionnaire is edited by Samuel Chan, with contributions from Bernard Loo and Joshua Ho. The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) is a key research component of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). It focuses on security research to serve national needs. IDSS' faculty and research staff conduct both academic and policy-oriented research on security-related issues and developments affecting Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific. Its research agenda presently comprises the following programmes: Maritime Security, the Revolution in Military Affairs, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Contemporary Islam, Indonesia and China.

CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

[Ex-Taleban chief named governor](#)

BBC – 7 January 2008

A former Afghan Taleban leader who switched sides has been made governor of a town in Helmand province won back from the rebels in December. Mullah Abdul Salaam takes charge of Musa Qala, which was recaptured by British and Afghan troops after being held by the Taleban for nine months. The town took on symbolic significance for both sides - it was described as "iconic" by the UK's defence secretary. It was retaken after aerial bombardment and fighting on the outskirts. But the Taleban melted away when the Afghan national army marched in. A major factor was that Mullah Abdul Salaam, formerly a key Taleban commander, had been persuaded to switch sides. Now he is the government's man in Musa Qala as district governor, and he is saying all the right things, encouraging townspeople to support the government. "It's a good opportunity," he says. "The international community has come to your assistance - it helps your children, it gives you money. It's for you to implement the law now - Allah's law." As a former Taleban commander, those are strong words. The test will be whether he follows them up with actions - and people critical of the government need to be won over soon. But over Christmas, two diplomats from the UN and the EU were expelled for allegedly meeting and doing deals with the Taleban. UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown says there are no negotiations with the Taleban. It all sends a confusing message as to exactly what tactics the Afghan government and the international community are using to break the insurgency, and whether those efforts are being properly co-ordinated.

[Rival Kenyan leaders agree to meet as death toll climbs](#)

CNN – 8 January 2008

Kenya's president and opposition leader will meet to address vote-counting irregularities and the ensuing violence in which nearly 500 people have been killed. President Mwai Kibaki and bitter rival Raila Odinga agreed to talk under the mediation of the African Union's chairman by relaying the concerns of the Kenyan people. Ghanaian President John Kufuor is expected to arrive in Kenya on Tuesday evening to mediate talks between the two, which has led Odinga's party to cancel a planned rally earlier that day. Government spokesman Alfred Mutua would not say if the president was prepared to enter into a power-sharing arrangement with Odinga, but said Kibaki is ready to work with "like-minded parties." Kibaki invited Odinga to take part in talks Friday at the president's official residence, the State House, Mutua said. Reacting to that written invitation, Odinga's spokesman said the opposition leader "would be happy to meet Mr. Kibaki on Friday if it is part of the negotiations that are to be mediated by President Kufuor of Ghana." International mediation is a key demand of Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement, which has accused Kibaki of stealing his re-election victory. Odinga supporters trying to attend two scheduled rallies in Nairobi last week were met with water cannon and tear gas before the party agreed to postpone the demonstrations. The violence has been concentrated in Nairobi and near the Rift Valley town of Eldoret in western Kenya, where international aid began pouring in over the weekend. The

Kenyan government said on Monday that the death toll had reached 482 people, while the United Nations had said that about 250,000 people have been displaced by the violence since the December 27 vote. Kibaki has said he is ready to consider a government of national unity. While Odinga has indicated he is willing to negotiate, he has not backed down from his demands that Kibaki resign and hold fresh elections. Meanwhile, a convoy of food trucks left the eastern port of Mombasa on Sunday in an effort to address the humanitarian crisis. Twenty trucks loaded with 670 tons of food -- enough to feed at least 70,000 people for two weeks -- set out under police escort, the World Food Program said in a statement. Carrying pulses, vegetable oil and a highly nutritious corn-soya blend, the vehicles were destined for Nairobi and the Rift Valley town of Eldoret in western Kenya, the U.N. food agency said.

[Iraq defense minister sees need for U.S. until 2018](#)

International Herald Tribune – 15 January 2008

The Iraqi defense minister said Monday that his nation would not be able to take full responsibility for its internal security until 2012, nor be able on its own to defend Iraq's borders from external threat until at least 2018. Those comments from the minister, Abdul Qadir, were among the most specific public projections of a timeline for the American commitment in Iraq by officials in either Washington or Baghdad. And they suggested a longer commitment than either government had previously indicated. Pentagon officials expressed no surprise at Qadir's projections, which were even less optimistic than those he made last year. President George W. Bush has never given a date for a military withdrawal from Iraq but has repeatedly said that American forces would stand down as Iraqi forces stand up. Given Qadir's assessment of Iraq's military abilities on Monday, such a withdrawal appeared to be quite distant, and further away than any American officials have previously stated in public. Qadir's comments are likely to become a factor in political debate over the war. All of the Democratic presidential candidates have promised a swift American withdrawal, while the leading Republican candidates have generally supported Bush's plan. Now that rough dates have been attached to his formula, they will certainly come under scrutiny from both sides. Senior Pentagon and military officials said Qadir had been consistent throughout his weeklong visit in pressing that timeline, and also in laying out requests for buying new weapons through Washington's program of foreign military sales. He offered no specifics on a timeline for reducing the number of American troops in Iraq. His statements were slightly less optimistic than what he told an independent United States commission examining the progress of Iraqi security forces last year, according to the September report of the commission, headed by a former NATO commander, Marine General James L. Jones, who is retired. Then Qadir said he expected Iraq to be able to fully defend its borders by 2018.

TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Three Muslims shot dead in Thailand's restive south](#)

AFP – 10 January 2008

Three Muslims were shot dead by suspected Islamic rebels and seven others were injured in a string of shootings in Thailand's restive south, police said on Thursday. A 34-year-old Muslim government official was gunned down on Wednesday in a drive-by shooting in Yala, one of three insurgency-torn provinces bordering Malaysia, police said. Later in the day, gunmen opened fire on five Muslims who were sitting outside a house in Yala, killing one and wounding four others. Militants also ambushed a motorcycle carrying three Muslims late on Wednesday, police said, adding one man was shot dead with two others injured. One Buddhist villager was also shot and wounded in a separate attack late Wednesday. The southern region was an autonomous Malay Muslim sultanate until Buddhist Thailand annexed it in 1902, provoking decades of animosity toward the state. More than 2,800 people have been killed since the rebellion began in January 2004, with killings growing more frequent and brutal.

[Colombian hostages freed after 6 years, reunited with families](#)

AFP – 11 January 2008

Two high-profile female hostages held for six years in the Amazon jungle were freed on Thursday after Colombian rebels handed them over to the government of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Ms Clara Rojas and former legislator Consuelo Gonzalez de Perdomo landed in Caracas aboard a private jet in Caracas just hours after Venezuelan helicopters plucked them earlier from a secret site deep in the Colombian jungle. Mrs Gonzalez's daughters Patricia and Maria Fernanda held a tearful reunion with their mother on the tarmac, when the former Colombian lawmaker captured in 2001 met her two-year-old granddaughter for the first time. Ms Rojas was the campaign manager for Franco-Colombian politician Ms Ingrid Betancourt when they were both seized by the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in February 2002. Ms Rojas also said the rebels delivered proof to Venezuelan authorities that eight other high-profile hostages are alive. The group included three legislators, a governor, and army and police officers. The FARC is one of the world's longest running insurgencies, and the rebels are believed to hold around 750 hostages. The guerrillas agreed to release the two women to the neighbouring Venezuela under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross, but not directly to their foes in the Colombian government of conservative President Alvaro Uribe. The women were part of a group of more than 40 hostages - including Ms Betancourt and three US nationals - that the FARC wants to exchange for 500 rebels jailed by the Colombian government.

[US & Israel on Canadian torture watch list](#)

AFP – 18 January 2008

The United States and Israel are on a Canadian Foreign Affairs Department watch list of countries where prisoners risk being tortured, CTV television reported on Thursday. The

document cited the US prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as a place where prisoners could be tortured. Guantanamo holds Omar Khadr, a Canadian accused of killing a US soldier with a hand grenade in Afghanistan when he was 15 years old. CTV said the document is used in a workshop to teach Canadian diplomats how to tell if a Canadian held in a foreign jail has been tortured, CTV reported. The document lists a series of countries where the possibility of torture is high, including Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and China. But it also includes the United States and Israel. It highlights US torture techniques including forced nudity, isolation and sleep deprivation, CTV said. Questioned by email on the reported document, Foreign Affairs Department spokesman Neil Hrab said 'the training manual is not a policy document and does not reflect the views or policies of this government.' In an interview with CTV, Khadr's lawyer, Mr Bill Kuebler, said he was surprised the Canadian government has done nothing to protect his client if there are suspicions he may have been mistreated in Guantanamo. Mr Kuebler said other western countries have successfully pressed for the release of their citizens held at Guantanamo. Human rights groups and prominent Canadian citizens are calling for 21-year-old Khadr's repatriation so he can benefit from normal due process of law. Training diplomats to make them more aware of torture began after Syrian-Canadian Maher Arar in 2002 was deported by the United States to Syria, where he was imprisoned for nearly a year and said he was tortured. A Canadian inquiry cleared Arar of all suspicions of terrorism and the Canadian government issued an apology and awarded him a substantial compensation.

DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

[Iran 'could restore ties with US'](#)

BBC – 3 January 2008

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has said relations with the US could be restored in the future. In a speech to students, he said the time was not right to restore ties, but if it were ever in Iran's interests he would endorse such a move. The US and Iran cut their diplomatic ties after the 1979 Islamic revolution and the subsequent takeover of the US embassy by militants in Tehran. Relations have been further strained by the row over Iran's nuclear programme. "We have never said these relations should be suspended indefinitely," said Ayatollah Khamenei. But he said now was not the right time because it would be harmful to Iran. Restored diplomatic ties would provide "an opportunity for US infiltration, traffic of their intelligence agents and espionage of Iran". Last month, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Washington was open to better relations with Tehran if it stopped enriching uranium. Ayatollah Khamenei maintained his country's uncompromising line on the nuclear programme, saying his country would not halt enriching uranium. Iran says its nuclear programme is for peaceful electricity generation only, but the US and several European allies fear Tehran is trying to build nuclear weapons. The Ayatollah's words are unlikely to appear conciliatory in Washington and London says the BBC's Middle East analyst Roger Hardy. Rather, they were probably directed at a domestic audience ahead of parliamentary elections in March. The Ayatollah

was also underlining the fact that he, and he alone, has the final word on foreign policy, says our analyst.

[Iranian boats 'harass' U.S. Navy, officials say](#)

CNN – 7 January 2008

Five Iranian Revolutionary Guard boats "harassed and provoked" three U.S. Navy ships early Sunday in international waters, the U.S. military said Monday, calling the encounter a "significant" confrontation. An Iranian official, however, said it was not a serious incident, the state-run news agency IRNA reported. U.S. military officials said the incident occurred early Sunday morning in the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow shipping channel leading in and out of the Persian Gulf. They said that as the guided missile destroyer USS Hopper, the guided missile cruiser USS Port Royal and the guided-missile frigate USS Ingraham were entering the Persian Gulf, five Iranian boats approached them at high speed and swarmed them. The Iranian boats made "threatening" moves toward the U.S. ships and in one case came within 200 yards of one of them, the U.S. officials said. The U.S. Navy also received a radio transmission that officials believe came from the Iranian boats. The transmission said, "I am coming at you. You will explode in a couple of minutes," the U.S. military officials told CNN. When the U.S. ships heard that radio transmission, they took up their gun positions and officers were "in the process" of giving the order to fire when the Iranians abruptly turned away, the U.S. officials said. After the radio transmission, one of the Iranian boats dropped white boxes into the water in front of the U.S. ships, the officials said. It was not clear what was in the boxes, the officials said. No shots were fired, and no one was injured. A Pentagon spokesman characterized the incident as "perplexing" and "cause for real concern." Iran's foreign ministry spokesman downplayed the incident, calling it "ordinary," IRNA reported. Mohammad Ali Hosseini said that similar incidents had occurred in the past between Iranian and American ships, and the issues were resolved as soon as the ships recognized each other, IRNA reported. The Strait of Hormuz, which is in international waters, is near much of the world's oil supplies. In November the U.S. military reported that Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps had taken command of Tehran's naval operations in the Persian Gulf. The United States considers the Revolutionary Guard to be a major supporter of terrorist activity.

[Olmert, Abbas try to close gaps ahead of Bush visit](#)

Reuters – 7 January 2008

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas meet on Tuesday in a last-minute attempt to get stalled peace talks going before a visit by U.S. President George W. Bush. Six weeks have passed since Bush convened a conference in Annapolis, Maryland, to launch the first talks in seven years with the aim of clinching a deal before he leaves office in a year that would establish a Palestinian state. But the two sides, bogged down by a dispute over Jewish settlement expansion on occupied land near Jerusalem, have yet to set up working groups to try to resolve many of the thorniest issues in the conflict. Talks on Monday between the lead negotiators -- Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and former Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qurie -- ended without announcement of an expected agreement on the groups and how they will

proceed. Olmert and Abbas will continue the negotiations at a meeting with Livni and Qurie on Tuesday, a day before Bush begins his first presidential visit to Israel and the occupied West Bank. The delay in reaching a deal on how to conduct the talks underscored the large hurdles facing Bush in meeting his goal of getting Olmert and Abbas to reach an agreement within a year. It is unclear how the three weakened leaders hope to close the gaps over borders, and the fate of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees before Bush leaves office in January 2009. Abbas wields little authority beyond the Israeli-occupied West Bank after Hamas Islamists seized control of the Gaza Strip in June. Israel has stepped up attacks in Gaza in recent weeks against militants who fire cross-border rockets.

[Ahmadinejad loses favor with Khamenei, Iran's top leader](#)

International Herald Tribune – 7 January 2008

A rift is emerging between President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, suggesting that the president no longer enjoys the full backing of Khamenei, as he did in the years after his election in 2005. In the past, when Ahmadinejad was attacked by political opponents, the criticisms were usually silenced by Khamenei, who has the final word on state matters and who regularly endorsed the president in public speeches. But that public support has been conspicuously absent in recent months. There are numerous possible reasons for Ahmadinejad's loss of support, but analysts here all point to one overriding factor: the U.S. National Intelligence Report last month, which said that Iran suspended its nuclear weapons program in 2003 in response to international pressure. The report sharply decreased the threat of a military strike against Iran, allowing the authorities to focus on domestic issues, with important parliamentary elections looming in March. Now that Iran is not under the threat of a military attack, all contradictions within the establishment are surfacing," said Saeed Leylaz, an economic and political analyst. "The biggest mistake that Americans have constantly made toward Iran was adopting radical approaches, which provided the ground for radicals in the country to take control." Iran had been under increasing international pressure for its refusal to suspend its uranium enrichment program, which could be pursued for either peaceful or military purposes. In separate speeches last year, American and French officials did not rule out military attack against Iran if it continued its defiance. Those threats have stopped since the National Intelligence Report was released. While the pressure was on, the leadership was reluctant to let any internal disagreements show. Senior officials, including Khamenei, constantly called for unity and warned that the enemy, a common reference to the United States, could take advantage of such differences. The Iranian presidency is a largely ceremonial post. But Ahmadinejad used the office as a bully pulpit, espousing an economic populism that built a strong following among the middle and lower classes and made him a political force to be reckoned with. That popularity won him the strong backing of the supreme leader. But the relationship began to sour even before the National Intelligence Report was released. A source close to Khamenei, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution, said Khamenei had been especially disappointed by Ahmadinejad's economic performance, which had led to steep inflation in basic necessities, from food to property values. Economists have long criticized Ahmadinejad's economic policies, warning that his

reliance on oil revenues to finance loans to the poor and to buy cheap imports would lead to inflation and cripple local industries. Inflation has risen from 12 percent in October 2006 to 19 percent this year, according to figures released by the Iranian Central Bank. In the face of rising criticism, Ahmadinejad has for the first time acknowledged that Iran was suffering from rising prices. Previously, he had called inflation a fiction invented by his political enemies. But he blamed previous governments, Parliament and what he called a 36-percent increase in the prices of goods in international markets. The coming parliamentary elections will provide a stark test for Ahmadinejad and his popularity among the poor. The conservative politicians who supported him in 2005 have, in many cases, turned into his fiercest critics and are now worried chiefly that they will be disqualified as candidates before the vote, a power that the government has exercised in the past.

[Bush sees hope for Mideast peace but warns on Iran](#)

AFP – 10 January 2008

US President George W. Bush said he saw a historic opportunity for Middle East peace as he launched a landmark regional tour on Wednesday, but warned that Iran was a threat to the world. Bush, who is seeking to score a foreign policy triumph in his last year in office, said he hoped to see a deal to end decades of Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the time he leaves office in January 2009. Negotiations were relaunched amid great fanfare at a US conference six weeks ago but have since faltered amid mounting violence between Israel and Gaza militants, and Jewish settlement activity on occupied Palestinian land. But Bush also launched a fresh verbal attack against Iran amid escalating tensions over a naval standoff in the Gulf at the weekend and US charges that it is seeking to build a nuclear bomb. A weekend confrontation between Iranian vessels and US warships in the strategic Strait of Hormuz that has further inflamed a standoff over Tehran's nuclear programme. Bush warned that Tehran of "serious consequences" if Iran attacked US ships and said "all options are on the table to protect our assets." The Pentagon released a video and audiotape to back up its charge that Iranian speedboats swarmed around three US warships and radioed a threat to blow them up. Iran retorted that it was a "clumsy" fabrication. An Israeli official had said Olmert would present Bush with new Israeli material which would challenge the findings of a US intelligence report in December which found Tehran had abandoned its clandestine nuclear weapons programme in 2003. Olmert meanwhile said that Israel and the Palestinians will be unable to reach peace as long as Gaza militants continued their attacks, but vowed that his government was committed to continuing peace talks. Bush told Olmert that Israel must remove wildcat outposts in occupied Palestinian territories - although the international community considers all Israeli settlements illegal - something Olmert pledged to do. Israeli President Shimon Peres, a Nobel peace laureate, said 2008 would be a "moment of truth" but said "stopping the madness of Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas" was key in advancing peacemaking.

[S. Korea's Lee willing to meet Kim](#)

CNN – 14 January 2008

South Korean President-elect Lee Myung-bak said on Monday he is willing to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il to help in the denuclearization process as the reclusive Communist nation dismantles its nuclear program. "Leaders of the two Koreas can meet anytime if it would be helpful to the denuclearization of North Korea," Lee said, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency. "But the next summit has to take place in Seoul." Lee is to take office on February 25. South Korean presidents have met twice before with Kim -- first in 2000, when President Kim Dae-jung and Kim huddled in Pyongyang; and again this past October, when outgoing President Roh Moo-hyun held a second summit in the North Korean capital. Under a deal struck in February 2007, North Korea began to disable its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon -- which produced weapons-grade plutonium for the bomb it tested in 2006 -- in exchange for economic and energy assistance. But it has yet to document its past and present nuclear secrets, another condition of the deal, according to Washington, missing a December 31 deadline. North Korea said on Friday that it had informed the United States in November about its nuclear program, well in advance of the New Year's Eve deadline. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack denied the North Koreans had made the expected "declaration" of their nuclear secrets and downplayed their public statements. The final goal of attaining denuclearization of North Korea is set for the end of 2008.

[India PM visits China for summit](#)

BBC – 14 January 2008

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has begun a three-day official visit to China aimed at improving the strained relations between the two countries. He told the Chinese state news agency on arrival that ties between the states had acquired global significance. Mr Singh will hold talks with President Hu Jintao, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and China's top legislator, Wu Bangguo. Their discussions are expected to focus on territorial disputes and increasing bilateral trade, worth \$37bn (£18.9bn). In December, the powerful states held a landmark joint military exercise. The war games in the south-western Chinese province of Yunnan, the first of their kind between the two largest armies in the world, involved just over 100 soldiers from each side. Military ties between the countries have been tense since a brief but bloody border war in 1962.

[Moscow orders Britain to close two cultural offices in Russia](#)

International Herald Tribune – 14 January 2008

A British cultural organization defied Monday an order by the Russian government to close offices in two cities, creating fresh strain in the tense relations between Russia and Britain. The Russian Foreign Ministry summoned the British ambassador to Russia to its offices and threatened a series of punitive measures, including refusing to renew the visas of the organization's staff and opening tax proceedings against the group. The ambassador, Anthony Brenton, remained publicly defiant after the meeting, saying that the organization planned to continue operating all of its offices in the country. Brenton

also said that Moscow's demands violated international law on consular activities. The standoff marked a fresh impasse between the two governments, which have been at odds over a series of espionage and extradition disputes. The latest disagreement centers on the operations of the British Council, which is operated and financed by the British government to encourage cultural exchange between the two countries. The council has offices in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg - the same three cities where Britain maintains diplomatic missions. Late last year, as part of continuing tensions between Russia and Britain since the poisoning death in 2006 of a former KGB officer, Alexander Litvinenko, in London, Russia demanded that the British Council offices in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg be closed by Jan. 1. The Russian government, which has said the closure order is a retaliatory measure, contends that the offices operate illegally, and that the council has permission to maintain offices only in Moscow. Russia celebrates New Year's Day and Orthodox Christmas in an extended holiday. The dispute flared again on the first Monday after the holiday period, when both offices reopened after the seasonal break. The Foreign Ministry immediately released an angry statement, saying it had told Brenton to comply with Russian demands or risk straining relations further. "The ambassador was informed that the Russian side considered the action a deliberate provocation, directed at complicating the relationship between Russia and Britain," the statement said. Britain has denounced the order to close the offices, saying that the council's activities comply with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and should be immune from political disputes. James Barbour, a spokesman for the British Embassy, said that Brenton had been given a letter by the Russian Foreign Ministry, and was reviewing its contents. But the council, he said, would continue to operate. "My understanding, and the understanding of the British government, is that the offices of the British Council will remain open," he said. The government has also threatened to close the British Council's main office in Moscow as one of its retaliatory measures. Russia has also refused Britain's request to extradite the man it considers the main suspect in the killing of Litvinenko, The Associated Press reported from Moscow. Last year, Britain expelled four Russian diplomats in protest of its refusal, and Russia in turn kicked out four British diplomats. In addition, Russia has been angry at Britain for years over its refusal to extradite the billionaire Boris Berezovsky, a fierce critic of the Kremlin, and the Chechen separatist envoy Akhmed Zakayev. President Vladimir Putin and his government have voiced concerns about foreign organizations operating in Russia, and accused them of meddling and seeking to undermine the government.

[Bush brings arms deal with Saudi visit](#)

CNN – 15 January 2008

The Bush administration said Monday it notified Congress of plans to sell \$20 billion in sophisticated arms to Saudi Arabia. The deal includes the proposed sale of 900 "joint direct attack munitions" worth close to \$120 million. Arriving in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for talks with King Abdullah, Bush delivered a proposed weapons sale that is part of a U.S. strategy to beef up security of its Persian Gulf allies to counter threats posed by Iran's rising influence in the region. Sen. Joseph Biden, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the committee would examine the deal. "We need to be convinced that the sale makes sense militarily and ensure that it in no way harms our

security or those of our allies," the Democrat from Delaware said in a news release. "We must also make certain that the administration does not just try to use a few arms sales to substitute for the comprehensive, coherent strategy we need for the region." Bush's Mideast tour includes visits to Israel, the West Bank, Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[U.S. F/A-18 fighter jets crash in Persian Gulf](#)

CNN – 7 January 2008

Two U.S. Navy F/A-18 Super Hornets -- flying off the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman -- crashed Monday night in the Persian Gulf, U.S. Navy officials said. The aircrafts' three aviators were recovered safely after they ejected from the jets -- a single-seat F/A-18E and two-seat F/A-18F. The U.S. Navy did not immediately know the cause of the F/A-18 crash. There is no indication of hostile fire action, the officials said. The incident is not related to Sunday's confrontation between three U.S. Navy warships and five Iranian boats, Navy officials said.

[CVF could be delayed by up to 18 months](#)

Jane's Information Group – 16 January 2008

Acute budget pressures affecting the UK Ministry of Defence's (MoD's) departmental planning round have led it to consider delaying the flagship Future Aircraft Carrier (CVF) programme by up to 18 months, industry sources have confirmed to Jane's . However, the MoD insists that that no changes have yet been made to the current schedule for the two ships. The speculation comes just weeks before BVT Surface Fleet - the nascent surface ship joint venture between BAE Systems and VT Group - is set to stand up. The consolidation of the two companies' shipbuilding and support operations was deemed a prerequisite by government for the CVF project to receive the green light. The GBP3.9 billion (USD7.7 billion) programme to build two 65,000-tonne carriers for the Royal Navy received its long-awaited go-ahead in July 2007. The ships are currently planned to enter service in 2014 and 2016 respectively. However, a disappointing Comprehensive Spending Review settlement, and continued heavy expenditure on operations in Afghanistan, has put the defence budget under massive strain.

[Indonesia takes delivery of Kobra air defence system](#)

Jane's Information Group – 16 January 2008

Indonesia has taken delivery of its first Kobra integrated low to medium-level air defence system from Poland's Bumar Group. Ordered for USD35 million by the Indonesian Ministry of Defence in July 2005, the system arrived in Indonesia in September 2007 and passed acceptance tests in November. Indonesian personnel trained on the system between September and December and it is now in operational service with an anti-

aircraft unit of the Indonesian Land Forces. A second Kobra system will be delivered in early 2009.

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

[ASEAN members must work together or risk being sidelined: MM Lee](#)

Channel NewsAsia – 7 January 2008

Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew said ASEAN had no choice but to get together in the next 40 years or risk being sidelined. Mr Lee was speaking at a gala dinner on Monday to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS). Mr Lee said ASEAN needed to band together in the face of stiff competition and globalisation. He warned the grouping would face a different landscape in the next 40 years. Some 700 guests, including those from the business and diplomatic community, as well as senior civil servants and academics, attended the event. Mr Lee was also asked how ASEAN can weigh in on the Myanmar situation to ensure that things get better there in the next five to 10 years. Mr Lee said he would leave it to the Foreign Affairs Ministry to sort it out. On the economic outlook, Mr Lee said the Singapore economy should do well. He said he expected developments like the integrated resorts and the Formula One Grand Prix later this year to lift the economy. And barring any accidents, he added that Singapore will be at a different level in five years. If the good showing continues for another five years, Singapore then could be more like Italy or Austria. But he cautioned that it needs to be done carefully. Mr Lee was also asked how some students are caught up with economic concerns and showed less appreciation for the environment. "To lift people to a different level of living, a more cultivated way of life takes a very long time. I will not see it, maybe you will live long enough to see it, I wish you well."

[Japan plans S\\$14b aid to fight global warming](#)

Reuters – 10 January 2008

Japan plans to set aside about US\$10 billion (S\$14.4 billion) over the next five years to help countries such as China and Indonesia fight global warming, a newspaper reported on Thursday. Japan's aid programme would focus on measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions, ease the effects of disasters caused by global warming and promote the use of alternative energy sources, the Nikkei business daily said. The aid package would come in the form of grants or yen-denominated, low-interest loans, the daily said. Apart from helping improve the efficiency of China's ageing coal-fired power plants, it would be used to help developing countries gather and monitor meteorological data so that they could take measures to prevent natural disasters, Nikkei said. Japan was expected to formally agree to provide Indonesia with undisclosed aid in March, it said. Tokyo would also give financial assistance to Tuvalu, a low-lying Pacific country that was already suffering from rising seas and storm surges linked to climate change, it added. Japanese government officials were not immediately available for comment.

MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

[Four killed in Gaza as Israel vows to up army operations](#)

AFP – 7 January 2008

Four Palestinians, including at least two civilians, were killed in an Israeli incursion in Gaza on Sunday as Israel vowed more operations in the Hamas-run territory in response to rocket fire. The Palestinian Authority slammed "Israeli escalations" amid revived peace talks and ahead of a landmark visit to the region by US President George W. Bush to bolster the relaunched negotiations. The victims were killed during the hours-long incursion east of the Al-Bureij refugee camp, where Israeli jeeps, armoured vehicles and bulldozers backed by helicopters began operating early in the morning. The Israeli army had no immediate comment on the incident. At least 50 Palestinians have been wounded in the fighting, medics said. Five soldiers were wounded by an anti-tank missile fired at their vehicle during the operation targeting militants, the army said. Sunday's operation was the latest of near daily Israeli air and ground incursions aimed at stamping out repeated rocket fire from the coastal strip, which has killed almost two dozen people, the vast majority of them militants, over the past week. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said on Sunday the military would further ratchet up its action in the territory after a rocket fired by Gaza militants last week landed the farthest ever inside Israel. Increasingly isolated Gaza -- where the Islamist Hamas movement seized control in June 2006 after routing forces loyal to secular president Mahmud Abbas -- will be watching the Bush trip from the sidelines. Abbas has refused to hold talks with Hamas until it relinquishes control of Gaza and on Saturday the Islamists called Bush's visit unwelcome, with a spokesman saying in a statement that it was "aimed at serving the occupation."

[Turkey makes arrests, continues military operations against PKK](#)

MSNBC – 7 January 2008

Turkey is continuing operations, both civil and military, to counter the activities of the terrorist group the PKK, taking a number of people into police custody in Ankara while troops carried out operations in the south east Monday. Following a series of raids in Ankara, police counter terrorist teams took 19 persons suspected of links to the PKK into custody. According to officials, police raided six houses in a synchronised operation across the capital as part of what they described as a wider effort to crack down the terrorist organization's renewed recruiting attempts. Most of those detained were university students, officials said. Those detained are expected to appear in court on Thursday, following questioning by prosecutors. In the south east of Turkey, Turkish troops, backed by helicopters, carried out sweeps of the mountainous Gabar, Cirav and Kupeli regions on Monday. All three areas have been used by the PKK as refuges and as bases from which to launch attacks in the past.

[Thousands more U.S. troops poised to go to Afghanistan](#)

CNN – 10 January 2008

The Pentagon may send 3,000 Marines to Afghanistan in the coming weeks to reinforce the country's British-led sector ahead of an expected spring offensive by the Taliban and al Qaeda. U.S. Army Gen. Dan McNeill -- the top NATO commander in Afghanistan -- made the request. As of Wednesday, Defense Secretary Robert Gates was "giving it a hard look," according to Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell. Central Command and the Joint Chiefs of Staff have already approved the request. Gates could follow suit very quickly after finishing discussions with his commanders, Pentagon officials said. "The request is based upon an anticipated spring offensive by the Taliban. They failed last time, and they will fail again this time, but commanders are seeking additional forces to ensure that," Morrell told CNN, signaling that the request is expected to be approved. The Marines would be sent on a seven-month tour. It's considered a "major commitment" of forces, according to a Pentagon official. There are about 26,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, and the 3,000 additional forces would boost U.S. troop levels there to their highest point since the 2001 invasion. It's not known yet where the Marines will come from. Under the proposal, the bulk of the Marines would go to southern Afghanistan, where British and Canadian forces have been in heavy combat for months. Others may be assigned to training Afghan forces. NATO has been looking for a commitment of 7,000 additional forces for both combat and training missions. But member countries of the alliance have failed to meet that goal, and it had been expected for the last several weeks that McNeill would be forced to turn to the Pentagon for more forces.

[Dutch killed by 'friendly fire'](#)

CNN – 14 January 2008

Dutch troops killed two of their own comrades and two Afghan soldiers during "confused" weekend skirmishes with Taliban fighters in south-central Afghanistan, the Netherlands' Defense Ministry said Sunday. Another Dutch soldier was wounded during one of the firefights, which took place Saturday in Oruzgan province, north of Kandahar, Defense Ministry spokesman Robin Middle told CNN. An investigation into the deaths is under way. Middle said the battles took place at night and in bad weather near the Dutch base at Deh Rawod. About 1,200 of the roughly 1,500 soldiers from the Netherlands are based in Oruzgan. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force is trying to push back a resurgent Taliban in the region. U.S. and NATO allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 in response to al Qaeda's September 11 attacks on New York and Washington. The Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic militia that ruled most of Afghanistan at the time, allowed the terrorist movement to operate from bases within its territory. The United States is considering whether to dispatch another 3,000 U.S. Marines to bolster its force of about 26,000 ahead of an expected spring offensive by the Taliban. NATO, meanwhile, has called on members to commit an additional 7,000 troops to the fight.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[US experts say China planning to secure NKorea's nuclear arsenal](#)

AFP – 8 January 2008

China has contingency plans to dispatch troops into North Korea and secure nuclear weapons in the event of instability in the hardline communist state, according to US experts who have talked to Chinese military researchers. Any intervention by Beijing would be done as far as possible after consultations with the United Nations, but unilateral action was not ruled out, the experts said in a report published on the websites of two US think tanks. The report was compiled by experts from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies and the US Institute of Peace -- which published the report -- and Asia Foundation following their visit to China in June last year. North Korea, which reportedly has up to 10 nuclear bombs, is currently involved in a de-nuclearization programme in return for energy aid and diplomatic and security guarantees under a six-party mechanism involving also the United States, China, Russia, South Korea and Japan. The programme hit a snag recently after Washington accused Pyongyang of not meeting a December 31 deadline for a full declaration of its nuclear programmes. US experts took pains to emphasize that nuclear concern was only one part of the US-China dialogue on North Korea issues among the think tank community. China's overall concerns about instability in North Korea, including on the nuclear issue, are not new as they share a long border, said China expert Bonnie Glaser of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. The US experts also discussed with Chinese specialists trends in North Korea's economy and prospects for reform, current trends in Sino-North Korean economic relations and China's policy towards North Korea in the wake of Pyongyang's October 2006 nuclear weapons test.

[N. Korea can scrap nuclear arms in '08: US envoy](#)

Reuters – 10 January 2008

A top US nuclear envoy, who met South Korea's president-elect on Thursday, said it was possible to end North Korea's nuclear arms programme this year despite Pyongyang missing a deadline in a disarmament deal. US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill also extended an invitation for Lee Myung Bak, who takes office on Feb 25, to visit Washington. The former Seoul mayor won a landslide victory on Dec 19. 'There is no reason why we cannot finish the job in '08,' Mr Hill told reporters after meeting Mr Lee. North Korea missed an end-2007 deadline set in a six-way deal to give a full accounting of its nuclear arms programme and answer US suspicions of having a secret programme to enrich uranium for weapons. 'Throughout the six-party process, we have had these bumps in the road. We have had these missed deadlines but that ultimately we have been able to continue with the progress,' Mr Hill said. If energy-starved North Korea makes the nuclear declaration, it could receive 1 million tonnes of heavy fuel oil or equivalent aid and removal from a US terrorism blacklist. Mr Lee, a conservative who was a former CEO in the Hyundai Group, has pledged to work more closely with the United States on ending the North's atomic ambitions, which analysts said could bode well for relations between the allies. Outgoing President Roh Moo-hyun at times made statements critical

of Washington when he felt the Bush administration was taking too tough a stand on North Korea. Mr Hill, who arrived in Seoul from Tokyo, on Thursday departed for Beijing, which has hosted the disarmament talks also involving the two Koreas, Japan, Russia and the United States. He will next go to Moscow.

[Britain starts new push for nuclear power](#)

Reuters – 11 January 2008

Britain gave the go-ahead to a new generation of nuclear power stations on Thursday, setting no limits on nuclear expansion and adding momentum for a worldwide renaissance of atomic energy. The ruling Labour government considered nuclear power unattractive as recently as 2003 but now says it will help Britain meet its climate change goals and avoid overdependence on imported energy as North Sea oil and gas supplies dwindle. Nuclear power stations provide about 18 per cent of Britain's electricity now, but many are nearing the end of their lives. 'We want Britain to be more secure in its energy supply,' Prime Minister Gordon Brown told reporters. 'We are inviting companies to express an interest in building a new generation of power stations to replace the existing ones.' Energy Secretary John Hutton said he would set no limit on the construction of new plants. Nuclear operators welcomed the move and announced plans for at least four new reactors with the first running by late 2017. Environmental group Greenpeace, which succeeded in blocking an earlier pro-nuclear decision, said the public had been misled during recent consultations and its lawyers were already considering a fresh challenge. 'This is bad news for Britain's energy security and bad news for our efforts to beat climate change,' Greenpeace Executive Director John Sauven said, adding that government plans to store highly radioactive waste underground were not safe. Nuclear power is on the verge of a renaissance, having remained unchanged at 16 per cent of the global mix for the last 20 years, when the Chernobyl disaster curbed its growth. It is now becoming more competitive amid surging prices for oil and gas and buoyed by the need to cut carbon emissions to fight climate change. Already, countries such as France and Finland are building new nuclear plants and, in the United States, companies have begun filing licence applications, reinforcing the view atomic energy is part of the solution to the world's energy problems. There is opposition to nuclear among some states, however, including Germany, an anti-nuclear stronghold. Critics say the toxic waste from nuclear power generation remains a problem for thousands of years and is not worth the risk.