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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

['Renewed clashes' in north Yemen](#)

BBC – 17 January 2008

Reports from northern Yemen say there have been further clashes between security forces and Shia Muslim rebels. The reports say rebels loyal to Abdul-Malik al-Houthi have been besieging an army unit in the Marran mountains in Saada province. Al-Ayyam newspaper said at least 25 soldiers had been killed since Monday. There was no word on rebel casualties. The fighting has resumed six months after the government and the rebels agreed a ceasefire. Hundreds of people were killed in fighting between the two sides in the months before the truce. The rebels argue that Yemen's government is corrupt, too close to the West, and discriminates against their community. Mr Houthi has reportedly warned any attempt to launch a new campaign against his forces would have "devastating military, economic and social consequences across Yemen". The government in Sanaa says the rebels are seeking to overthrow it and impose Shia religious law.

[Outcry over Sudan appointment](#)

Al-Jazeera – 21 January 2008

A man accused of co-ordinating atrocities in Darfur has been named as a senior adviser to Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese president. Washington says that Musa Hilal is the leader of the Janjawid Arab militia blamed for much of the violence in the western province. The UN has imposed a travel ban on him for his alleged role in the atrocities. Hilal has frequently denied being a leader of Janjawid, who helped the government to put down a revolt by non-Arab tribes after they took up arms in early 2003. Last year, in an interview with Al Jazeera, he categorically stated that the US claims were "false". Sudan's president also rejected criticism of Hilal's appointment at a news conference during his visit to Turkey. Human Rights Watch has urged Ban Ki-Moon, the UN secretary-general, to press al-Bashir to revoke the appointment and investigate Hilal. Ahmed Haroun, secretary of state for humanitarian affairs, and Ali Kosheib, a pro-government militia leader, have already been accused of war crimes in Darfur. Last May, the Hague-based international criminal court issued arrest warrants for both men. Sudan has refused to hand over Haroun and Kosheib for trial.

[Hamas says won't abandon rockets under Israel attack](#)

Reuters – 22 January 2008

Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal said on Tuesday Palestinians would continue to target Israel with rockets until the Jewish state ended what he called its "onslaught" in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. But he said the Islamist group would consider any deal that ended Israeli attacks and restored Palestinian rights. Hamas leaders have offered a long-term truce with Israel in return for a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Hamas says it will not formally recognize Israel and its 1988 founding charter calls for the destruction of the Jewish state. Israel says its attacks on Gaza, which have killed and wounded scores of Palestinians, and a blockade on the narrow coastal

strip are aimed at stopping rockets and cutting support for the groups firing them. Meshaal said international pressure that forced Israel to resume fuel deliveries to a power plant in Gaza should continue until the blockade was removed. Asked about what Hamas critics call the futility of armed struggle against Israel's far superior military forces, Meshaal said there was no other way to force Israel to relinquish occupied land. The talks were launched after the Annapolis peace conference, which was hosted by the United States in November. Meshaal repeated his call on Abbas to accept unconditional talk with Hamas to solve differences between the two groups that have led to violence and two administrations in Gaza and the West bank. Palestinian groups opposed to the peace talks, including Hamas, will hold a large meeting in Damascus on Wednesday. Organizers said the conference, which will be also attended by a number of independent and national Palestinian figures, will issue a call for unity.

[Hamas challenges Egypt's bid to close Gaza border](#)

Reuters – 26 January 2008

Egyptian security forces greatly reduced their presence along the breached Gaza border late on Friday after Palestinian militants defied their attempts to seal the gaps by bulldozing a new opening. Thousands of Palestinians crossed unhindered from Hamas-run Gaza as the Egyptians pulled back, rushing to stock up on food and fuel and shop for other goods which are in short supply because of Israel's blockade of the strip. An Egyptian security source said the forces pulled back from crossing points after a security man was shot and wounded. Tens of thousands of Gaza Palestinians have crossed into Egypt since militants blew up a border wall on Wednesday to get around a blockade that Israel said it had imposed to try to counter cross-border rocket fire. The fall of the Rafah wall has also punched a new hole in a US-backed campaign to curb the clout of Hamas and strengthen Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, nearly eight months after the Islamist group routed Abbas's Fatah forces in Gaza. The Egyptian government faces a difficult balancing act. It does not want to be seen as aiding the Israeli blockade, but is under US and Israeli pressure to take control. It also fears the spread of Islamist influence and the effects of becoming home to so many undocumented Palestinians. On Friday, Egyptian forces began placing barbed wire and chain-link fences to stop more people crossing. But Hamas militants, cheered on by crowds of Gazans, used a bulldozer to flatten sections of the chain and concrete fence. Tensions flared at one point when Palestinians threw stones at Egyptian police, who responded with batons and water cannon. The Egyptian state news agency Mena said 22 Egyptian security men were injured while trying to contain the crowd. Egyptian security sources at the border said seven security men were injured, 6 by stones and one shot in the foot. By challenging Egyptian efforts to re-close the Gaza border, Hamas hoped to win assurances from Cairo that it would have a say in any future agreement to oversee the border crossings, including the one with Egypt at Rafah, Hamas sources say. Israeli officials said Mr Abbas planned to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Sunday, seeking support for controlling the crossings and for renewed peace talks despite the setbacks. Citing the breach in Gaza's southern border, some top Israeli officials have advocated cutting Israel's remaining links with the coastal territory and putting the onus on Egypt. Hamas sources said the group decided to open a new section in the border fence to increase

pressure on Egypt. Israel, which occupied Gaza in 1967, pulled out its troops and settlers in 2005 but still controls the strip's northern and eastern borders, airspace and coastal waters.

[Defense Department Seeks \\$70 Billion for Terror War](#)

American Forces Press Service – 29 January 2008

President Bush is asking Congress to approve \$70 billion as partial payment for global war on terrorism operations in fiscal 2009, Defense Department officials said today. Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said during a news conference that the \$70 billion emergency supplemental request will fund operations through the first quarter of fiscal 2009. “Why we are submitting just a partial amount is predicated on a couple of things, one of which is the fact that ... we haven't gotten our money that's needed and has been requested for fiscal year '08 yet to fight the global war on terror,” he said. The department is still waiting for Congress to approve \$102 billion for this fiscal year, Morrell said. During his State of the Union address last night, President Bush asked Congress to approve the 2008 supplemental funding request quickly. How much the department will need is based on events on the ground, Morrell said. Trends in Iraq are positive, but Pentagon officials want to hear the reports of Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, Multinational Force Iraq commander; Navy Adm. William J. Fallon, U.S. Central Command chief; and the Joint Chiefs of Staff before making budgeting decisions. “So we are submitting the \$70 billion request with the anticipation that at some point we will go back to the Congress and ask for what else is needed in fiscal year '09,” Morrell said. The \$70 billion supplemental request is a marker for what the department will need in fiscal 2009, Morrell said. That money should be able to at least handle much of the first quarter of the fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1, and then the rest will be executed by a subsequent administration and secretary of defense, he noted. “But we will likely come back to the Congress at some point in this year to revise the global war on terror funding request, to include what is needed in its totality,” he said.

[U.S. Envoy Cites Ethnic Cleansing in Kenya](#)

Washington Post – 30 January 2008

The top U.S. envoy to Africa called the month of post-election violence in Kenya "ethnic cleansing" and said Wednesday Washington was reconsidering hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the country. Jendayi Frazer said neither President Mwai Kibaki nor his chief rival, opposition leader Raila Odinga, is doing enough to stop the bloodshed that has claimed more than 800 lives since the disputed Dec. 27 presidential vote. Much of the violence has pitted other tribes, including Odinga's Luo, against Kibaki's Kikuyu who are the largest ethnic group. Kikuyus have long been resented for their dominance of Kenya's economy and politics, but poor Kikuyu are among the slum dwellers who have been left out of the country's economic boom. Frazer said the violence she saw during a visit earlier this month to the western Rift Valley pitted the Kalenjin, who support Odinga, against Kikuyus, but did not consider the killings a genocide. In Washington, the State Department appeared to back away from Frazer's characterization of the violence as ethnic cleansing. Kikuyus were the major victims of the first explosion of violence after

the announcement that Kibaki had won the election, which the international community and election monitors agree was rigged. Hundreds of Kikuyus have been killed, and members of the group account for more than half of the 255,000 chased from their homes, most in the Rift Valley. In the Rift Valley, decades-old grudges over land are at the heart of the conflict. The valley is the traditional home of the Kalenjin and Masai people. British colonizers seized large tracts of land to cultivate fertile farms there. When much of that land was redistributed after independence in 1963, President Jomo Kenyatta flooded it with his Kikuyu people, instead of returning it to the Kalenjin and Masai. Some of the violence is an expression of long pent-up anger by the marginalized majority in Nairobi slums, where 65 percent of the capital's residents teeter are struggling just to survive. Human rights groups and others accuse politicians of orchestrating the violence. Frazer said neither Kibaki nor Odinga, who says he won the election, have done enough to halt the violence. She said speeches made by both had proved counterproductive. Frazer said the United States was reviewing all its aid to Kenya, expected to amount to more than \$540 million this year, even though most goes to the people not to the government. She acknowledged that most U.S. funds in Kenya are used to fight AIDS and malaria and go to non-governmental organizations. The United States previously said it would not threaten deep aid cuts. And the State Department spokesman said Wednesday any review was not likely to result in cuts in humanitarian assistance, which makes up the bulk of U.S. aid to Kenya. Targeting aid is part of the pressure the international community is bringing to bear on Kibaki and Odinga to share power to end the crisis. Former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is negotiating, but says it will take a year just to settle on a plan for resolving the deep-rooted problems. The European Union and other countries, including Canada, have already warned that they will cut aid if the rival sides do not make progress in resolving the crisis.

[Sudan Activists Call for Help in Darfur](#)

AP – 31 January 2008

In a former life, Emmanuel Jal turned a gun against his government as a conscripted rebel soldier in his native Sudan. These days, the 28-year-old is a hip-hop artist who gave up his machine gun for a microphone, but keeps his aim on the Sudanese government. He accuses Khartoum of committing human rights abuses in Darfur, and alleges African leaders are allowing it to happen. He and other Darfur citizen-activists brought their case to the Ethiopian capital Tuesday to "tell the African leaders, 'You've failed us,'" he said. More than 40 heads of state are expected here for the African Union's annual summit, which starts Thursday. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon plans to visit Addis Ababa during the summit to hold talks with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir about Darfur. The Sudanese campaigners — who included Darfuri women — urged the speedy full deployment of an AU-United Nations force to the war-ravaged western Sudanese region. They also demanded a stronger mandate for the troops that would allow the soldiers to better protect civilians. The U.N. estimates that 200,000 people have died and 2.5 million have been displaced since ethnic African rebels in Darfur took up arms against the Arab-dominated central government, accusing it of discrimination, in 2003. The government denies accusations it has committed widespread atrocities against civilians in the ensuing fighting. The AU and U.N. have pledged to send a 26,000-strong peacekeeping force to

Darfur to replace an undermanned, under-equipped AU force. About a third of that force, which largely incorporates the previous African peacekeepers, has been on the ground since Jan. 1 and has begun to secure the refugee camps. Full deployment of the so-called hybrid force has been delayed because the Sudanese government has been reluctant to accept non-African troops, and the United Nations has not been able to get governments to supply helicopters, which it says are essential for the mission to succeed. The future of the joint force, slated to become the largest peacekeeping operation in the world, is among topics to be discussed at the AU summit. The activists argued that it wasn't being raised urgently or forcefully enough. AU officials say finding soldiers — particularly enough soldiers to satisfy Sudan's demand for a "predominantly African" peacekeeping force — has been a challenge. He said one battalion each from Ethiopia and Egypt — a U.N. battalion can contain between 750 and 850 soldiers — should arrive by March. A battalion from Thailand should follow, he said. Nawal Hassan, 45, one of a handful of Darfuri women calling on the African Union to come to their region's aid, said more soldiers won't solve the problems. "We need protection, especially for the women," she said. "We need troops with a strong mandate. We want an international force. Really, we need neutral forces who have no interest with the Sudanese government." Other activists complained about soldiers who were unfamiliar with the language and culture, and about the lack of female soldiers and police officers.

[Senior Afghanistan Qaeda leader Libi killed](#)

Reuters – 31 January 2008

A senior Al-Qaeda leader in Afghanistan, described by Western authorities as one of Osama bin Laden's top six lieutenants, has been killed, U.S. officials and an al-Qaeda-linked Web site said on Thursday. The Web site said Abu Laith al-Libi had been killed in Pakistan, suggesting he may have died in a suspected U.S. missile strike that killed up to 13 foreign militants in Pakistan's North Waziristan border area this week. The prominence of the Libyan-born militant in al Qaeda was shown last year by his appearance in a video with the group's deputy leader. He was the first spokesman to announce bin Laden had survived the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. A statement on the Al-Fajr Media Center, a Web site often used by Islamic militants, said Libi had been "martyred along with a group of his brothers on the territory of Islamic Pakistan." "May God accept (Libi as a martyr)," the Ekhlaas.org Web site said. A Western official and senior U.S. defense official confirmed the Web site's report. There was no official word in Washington on the circumstances of Libi's death, which coincided with intensive contacts between U.S. and Pakistani security officials after a year in which violence escalated sharply in Afghanistan. A Pakistani daily, *The News*, said the suspected U.S. strike on Monday had targeted Libi and another senior figure, Obaidah al Masri, though residents in the tribal area had said the attack had targeted second or third tier al Qaeda leaders. Tribesmen had said a deputy of Libi had been staying in the area, which borders Afghanistan, and was among the dead, according to an intelligence official. "You're talking about a very seasoned commander ... the top or one of the absolute top military commanders that al Qaeda had in the region. That's what they lost," the Western official said.

TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Spain arrests 14 suspects on Islamist 'terrorism' ties: ministry](#)

AFP – 19 January 2008

Spanish police have smashed a suspected Islamist terror cell, arresting 14 people and recovering bomb-making equipment in overnight raids in Barcelona, the interior minister said on Saturday. "During our searches, we found various materials which could be explosives or be used to make explosives," Interior Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba told a press conference in Madrid. Those arrested included 12 Pakistanis and two Indians, he said. Four timing devices as well as computer equipment which was still being examined were also recovered. He said that the group could be characterised as "radical Islamist", was "highly organised" and was preparing to carry out an attack in the north-eastern Spanish city. The operation, which saw five homes raided by police, was carried out on the basis of information gathered by Spain's domestic and foreign intelligence agencies. The intelligence suggested "the possibility that a terrorist action was being prepared on Spanish soil, in Barcelona to be precise," Rubalcaba said. Police then "detected an organised group suspected of gathering materials used to make explosives," and decided immediately to swoop, he said. He added that it was "probable" that some of the 14 were innocent. Private radio station Cadena Ser reported that the suspects were believed to have links to a financial network for certain branches of Al-Qaeda. All the arrests took place in the Raval neighborhood of Barcelona, home to a large Muslim immigrant population, media reports said. In May last year in Barcelona, authorities dismantled a network that was recruiting fighters and funding militant organisations in North Africa and Iraq. Thirteen Moroccans and two Algerians were arrested in that case. On March 11, 2004, simultaneous bombings on commuter trains in the Spanish capital Madrid killed 191 people. Newspaper El Pais reported on its website that Spanish authorities have warned France, Portugal and Britain of the possibility of attacks on Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf during a visit to Europe next week. Small groups composed principally of Pakistanis were preparing to carry out attacks "imminently," the report cited Spanish intelligence agency sources as saying. Musharraf begins a European tour on Sunday that will see him visit Brussels, France, Britain and the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, speaking in Portugal, praised the intelligence services for the raids but said not to jump to conclusions about those arrested.

[Pakistan foils 'Ashura attacks'](#)

BBC – 19 January 2008

Police in Pakistan have arrested five men, including an alleged suicide bomber, on charges of planning to attack Shia processions in Karachi. The men were arrested in raids on Friday night, the day before the religious festival of Ashura. Hundreds of thousands of people participate in Ashura processions throughout Pakistan. Ashura, marking the assassination of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, is commemorated across the Muslim world. In Pakistan, the ancient commemoration can often turn into modern tragedy as Sunni extremists use the public event to carry out terror attacks. "The suspects have

acknowledged, after initial interrogations, that they planned to attack processions on the 9th and 10th of Muharram [19 and 20 January] with grenades and suicide attack," Azher Farooqi, police chief of Sindh province, said. "They also planned to attack army installations in the city, and intended to use cyanide to poison the sabeels." Sabeels are refreshment stands, with juices and water, available to mourners in the Ashura processions. This is the first time that police in Pakistan have recovered cyanide suspected to be meant for terror use. As well as cyanide, the police also recovered 6kg of explosive materials, several grenades and small arms. Mr Farooqi said that the arrested men were trained at a militant camp near the town of Mir Ali in North Waziristan. According to him, the arrested leader of the alleged terror cell, Mohammad Ejaz, was an expert in bomb-making and in the construction of explosive jackets for suicide bombers.

[Teenager 'confesses' Bhutto plot](#)

BBC – 20 January 2008

Pakistani police say they have arrested a teenage boy who has confessed to being part of a team instructed to kill opposition leader Benazir Bhutto. It was the first arrest in connection with last month's assassination. Security officials say the boy told them he was part of a backup squad trained to attack, if the initial attempt on her life had failed. But local newspapers say investigators are treating the boy's claims with caution. The unnamed 15-year-old was arrested in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province along with a more senior militant, officials say. He allegedly told investigators that he would have been "next in line" to attack Ms Bhutto. He also named a local militia commander, Baitullah Mehsud, as being behind the assassination, officials say. Mr Mehsud has already been accused by the Pakistani authorities but denies any involvement. The director of the US Central Intelligence Agency has also implicated Mr Mehsud in the assassination. Pakistan's Interior Secretary, Kamal Shah, said interrogators were trying to get supporting testimony from the second detainee before accepting the teenager's confession.

[Son of Osama disagrees with father](#)

AFP – 22 January 2008

One of Osama bin Laden's sons said he wishes his father would find "another way" to pursue his goals but does not believe his father is a terrorist, CNN television reported on Monday. In an interview with the US network, Omar bin Laden, 26, said he disagreed with the killing of civilians. "I try and say to my father: 'Try to find another way to help or find your goal. This bomb, this weapons, it's not good to use it for anybody,'" he said in the interview filmed in Cairo where he lives. Wearing his hair in braids and appearing with his British wife, Omar bin Laden said he had not spoken to his father since 2000, when he left an Al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan. "I told him I was going, and wanted to try life and see what it was like outside because, from a young age I was with my father, and I only saw and heard my father and his friends," he said. "My father told me, 'If this is what your choice - your decision - is, what can I tell you? I like you to be with me, but this is your decision.'" He said he does not believe his father is a terrorist. "Before they call it war, now they call it terrorism," he said. "He believes his job - to help

the people ... I don't think my father is a terrorist because history tells you he's not." When his father fought Soviet troops in Afghanistan, the United States considered him a hero, he said. As for the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, he said: "I don't think 9/11 was right personally, but it happened." "I don't think ... (the war) in Vietnam was right. I don't think what's going in Palestine is right." He said he does not know where his father is but doubts he will be caught because he has the backing of the local population. Asked if his father could be living on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, he said: "Maybe, maybe not." "Either way, the people there are different," he said. "They don't care about the government." The fourth of 11 children from his father's first wife and one of reportedly 19 fathered by the world's most wanted man, he said he and his wife are organising a horse race across North Africa to promote peace.

[Britain to unveil new terrorism law proposals](#)

AP – 24 January 2008

THE British government planned to unveil sweeping proposals for toughening its terrorism laws on Thursday, the government said. Home Secretary Jacqui Smith was scheduled to formally introduce to Parliament the plans to increase the limit for detaining suspects without charge from 28 days to 42 days, to allow police to take DNA samples from terrorism suspects and to urge judges to impose stiffer sentences on criminals whose offenses are linked to terrorism. Proposals to increase the maximum time terrorism suspects can be held by police are opposed by rival lawmakers, human rights groups and lawmakers within Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Labour party. 'We face a choice here,' Ms Smith said on British Broadcasting Corp radio. 'We can either sit on our hands, failing to recognise where there is a broad consensus that this is a risk that is growing that we might well face in the future, we can risk ... having to declare a national emergency in order to be able to do it.' 'Or we can, as we are proposing, legislate now - with the discussion that will be put in Parliament on the safeguards and on the circumstances in which it would be used - and have that available in the future,' she said. Opponents of the changes - including Britain's chief prosecutor and a former government chief legal adviser - claim no evidence has been produced to support an extension of detention limits.

Both major opposition parties, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, have said they will oppose the changes, raising the prospect that Brown could face his first parliamentary defeat as leader. Only 34 votes are needed to defeat the plans and a survey of Labour lawmakers by The Independent newspaper last month indicated that at least 38 lawmakers were vowing to oppose moves to extend the existing limits. Tony Blair suffered a humbling first defeat as prime minister in 2005 when lawmakers rejected his plan to increase the detention limit to 90 days, settling on a compromise of 28 days.

[Two men detained under ISA for terror activities](#)

Straitstimes – 24 January 2008

Two men have been detained under Singapore's Internal Security Act for planning terror activities, after being influenced by radical propaganda they found in publications and on video and the Internet. A third man who was involved in their activities was placed under

a Restriction Order, which allows him to stay home but limits what he can do outside the home. The Home Affairs Ministry, in making the announcement on Thursday, also said it was releasing six men. They are: five Jemaah Islamiah detainees and a man who helped the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a Philippine militant group. Both of the new detainees, taken in last month, were aged 26. One of them is Muhammad Zamri Abdullah, who had gone overseas to try to join a 'mujahidin network', whose aim is to wage armed jihad overseas and die a martyr. Since 2003, Zamri had also spread his radical ideas to his associates, and succeeded in influencing two others with his ideology backing armed jihad. One of them was Maksham Mohd Shah, 26, who was also detained last month. The other was Mohammad Taufik Andjah Asmara, also 26, who was issued with a Restriction Order (RO). No further information was given on the backgrounds or occupations of the three. The arrests come less than a year after a 'self-radicalised' individual, former law lecturer Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader, was detained after he got a plane ticket to go to Afghanistan to join the Taleban. In early 2006, Zamri falsely claimed to be the Singapore representative of a foreign radical group, and made Maksham and Taufik 'group' members by taking the bai'ah, or oath of allegiance, to him. He also collected money from them, with the intention of donating it to another violent foreign radical group. In mid-2006, as a result of his interest in online jihadist rhetoric, Zamri befriended a foreigner who was previously identified as a member of the JI's Al-Ghuraba cell, based in Karachi, Pakistan. In November that year, Zamri and Maksham travelled overseas to meet this person to get more jihadist material. Significantly, the ministry said in a three-page statement, the duo planned to take the bai'ah with leaders of radical and militant groups in that country so as to enter foreign 'mujahidin networks'. Zamri believed doing so would enable them to get training and eventually travel overseas to wage armed jihad in places like Afghanistan, Palestine and Chechnya. One of the leaders they wanted to meet was a known leader of a terrorist group. Both Zamri and Maksham eventually failed to take the bai'ah, but only because they could not get an appointment with the said leaders, the ministry said. Like Zamri, Maksham was keen to wage armed jihad and martyr himself. He subsequently developed radical ideas that included constructing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for use in armed jihad. He experimented with using sparklers to make the bombs, having been inspired by news footage that showed Molotov cocktails being used in attacks. Later, he decided to travel overseas to source for materials commonly used to make IEDs, such as ball-bearings and fertilisers, so as to avoid detection in Singapore. He also initiated overseas camping trips after watching terrorist training videos. Both Maksham and Zamri used the trips 'to toughen themselves mentally and physically so that they would be prepared to undertake armed jihad', the ministry said. As for Taufik, Maksham introduced him to Zamri in 2003, and he soon became influenced by the radicalised duo. He, too, consumed radical propaganda which further radicalised him, and over time, he too was supportive of participating in armed jihad as a mujahidin. Investigations showed that he had begun to gradually distance himself from Zamri and Maksham, and became less involved in their activities and discussions, the ministry said. He was issued with an RO in December last year.

[Four admit plot to behead Muslim soldier in UK](#)

CNN – 29 January 2008

Four men have pleaded guilty to offenses linked to a plot to kidnap a British Muslim soldier on leave and behead him in a garage. Parviz Khan, Basiru Gassama, Mohammed Irfan, and Hamid Elasmara entered their pleas several weeks ago, but the media were restricted from reporting the matter until Tuesday, when two other men went on trial alongside the four. The four also admitted charges related to sending equipment to terrorists. Leicester Crown Court was told that Khan, 37, devised the plot to kidnap and kill the soldier and send equipment to terrorists in Pakistan and along the Afghan border. A jury heard that Khan intended to behead the soldier "like a pig" and release footage of the killing on the internet, the British Press Association reported. Prosecutors said that Khan hoped to kidnap the Muslim soldier in Birmingham's Broad Street entertainment quarter with the help of drug dealers, the agency added. Gassama, 30, admitted knowing about the plot. Irfan, 31, and Elasmara, 44, admitted helping Khan supply the equipment. The two men on trial, Amjad Mahmood and Zahoor Iqbal, are also accused of having a role in the plot but both deny the charges. Mahmood, 32, denies knowing about the plot and failing to tell anyone. Iqbal, 30, denies possessing a document likely to be of use to a terrorist. The case continues.

DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

[NATO welcomes US nomination of future Commander ISAF](#)

NATO News – 18 January 2008

The NATO Secretary General and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe today welcomed the nomination by President Bush of General David D McKiernan as the next commander of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. General McKiernan is currently Commanding General, United States Army Europe and Seventh Army, Heidelberg, Germany. General McKiernan will succeed the current COMISAF, General Dan McNeill, at a later date in 2008. On the nomination, NATO Secretary General stated: "On behalf of the NATO Alliance, I am very grateful for the hard work and commitment of the current COMISAF, General Dan McNeill, on what is the Alliance's most important and challenging operation. I warmly welcome the nomination by President Bush and am looking forward to working with General McKiernan."

[Kosovo issue hangs over Serbia vote](#)

BBC – 20 January 2008

People in Serbia have been turning out in large numbers for the presidential elections, which could shape the country's future direction. There are nine candidates, but early results suggest a straight race between the current pro-Western President, Boris Tadic, and the leader of a hardline nationalist party, Tomislav Nikolic. The campaign has been dominated by three key issues - the economy, closer ties to the European Union and the

future of Kosovo. Both the frontrunners oppose independence for Kosovo, but this looks inevitable. In the next few weeks or months, ethnic Albanians in the UN-administered province are expected to declare independence.

[Israel stops fuel shipments; Gaza City goes dark](#)

CNN – 21 January 2008

Gaza City was plunged into darkness Sunday after Israel blocked the shipment of fuel that powers its only electrical plant in retaliation for persistent rocket attacks by Gaza militants. The power cut forced already beleaguered Gazans to stock up on food and batteries in anticipation of dark, cold days ahead. Gaza officials warned the move would cause a health catastrophe while a U.N. agency and human rights groups condemned Israel. "We have the choice to either cut electricity on babies in the maternity ward or heart surgery patients or stop operating rooms," Gaza Health Ministry official Dr. Moaiya Hassanain said. Israel justified the cutoff because of continuous rocket attacks by Gaza militants. Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Arye Meckel said the Gaza Strip continues to receive 70 percent of its electricity supply directly from Israel, which would not be affected, and another 5 percent from Egypt. The blackout "is a Hamas ploy to pretend there is some kind of crisis to attract international sympathy," he told The Associated Press. Officials from the ruling Islamic militant group Hamas shut down the plant just before 8 p.m. and Gaza City went dark, Gaza Energy Authority head Kanan Obeid said. TV crews and reporters were invited to witness the shutdown. Minutes later, residents started a candlelight march as a protest. Live Associated Press TV pictures showed dots of light moving slowly up a darkened main street. Israel has blockaded Gaza for seven months, since the Islamic militant Hamas overran the territory, allowing up until now only basic food items and humanitarian supplies into Gaza. That changed Thursday when Defense Minister Ehud Barak ordered all crossings into Gaza closed because of a spike in rocket barrages, cutting off fuel supplies. Several weeks ago, Israel reduced the fuel supply as a pressure tactic. A defiant Hamas said its attacks on Israel would not cease because of the sanctions. "We will not raise the white flag, and we will not surrender," Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said Sunday. The regular fuel shipment from Israel did not arrive Sunday because the fuel terminal was closed, and the power plant has almost no reserves, said Rafik Maliha, director of the power plant. The U.N. organization in charge of Palestinian refugees warned the blockade would drastically affect hospitals, sewage treatment and water facilities. "The logic of this defies basic humanitarian standards," said Christopher Gunness, spokesman for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA. The British group Oxfam called Israel's cutoff "ineffective as well as unlawful." Gisha, an Israeli group that has fought the fuel cutbacks in Israel's Supreme Court, said: "Punishing Gaza's 1.5 million civilians does not stop the rocket fire. It only creates an impossible 'balance' of human suffering on both sides of the border." Israeli Cabinet minister Zeev Boim said that rather than condemning Israel, the U.N. should condemn Palestinian militants for firing rocket barrages at Israel. "I don't hear the U.N.'s voice," Boim said.

[New Iran action agreed, officials say](#)

CNN – 22 January 2008

The U.N. Security Council's permanent members and Germany agreed Tuesday on a new draft resolution on sanctions against Iran, strengthening existing measures over the country's refusal to suspend its nuclear program, officials said. The six permanent members agreed on the contents of a new resolution, which will be brought before the Security Council by Germany, France and Britain, where it could be discussed with the remaining council members over the coming weeks, he said. He gave no details of the resolution's contents. The Security Council already has imposed two rounds of sanctions over Iran's defiance of international demands that it suspend uranium enrichment. A European diplomat and a U.S. official, both speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said the resolution would expand existing sanctions. But the European diplomat said it would not feature new economic sanctions. A U.S. official referred specifically to travel bans and asset freezes, but said the group agreed not to release the full text of the agreement until it had been distributed to the rest of the Security Council in the coming days. A U.S. intelligence assessment last month said Iran had stopped active work on a nuclear weapons program in 2003. That appeared to stiffen resistance from veto-wielding Security Council members Russia and China to a quick and harsh third round of sanctions over Iran's defiance of international demands that it suspend uranium enrichment. The group entered the meetings divided on four distinct issues, but after the discussions -- primarily featuring Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov -- were able to hash out the new agreement, the U.S. official said. Iran insists it never had a nuclear weapons program and says its work is for peaceful purposes such as energy production. Its foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, stressed Tuesday that his country opposed the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and voiced confidence about Iran's cooperation with the IAEA. Earlier in January, IAEA director Mohammed Elbaradei visited Tehran, and Iran agreed to answer all remaining questions over its nuclear activities in the next few weeks.

[Russia warns EU on Kosovo force](#)

CNN – 29 January 2008

Russia warned the United Nations and European Union Tuesday against taking any unilateral steps with Kosovo, saying such action would create a "destructive precedent." EU leaders agreed last month to send an 1,800-strong force of police and legal officials to Kosovo to maintain stability after a declaration of independence, which is expected in the next few months. "We are hoping that the U.N. secretary-general and our partners realize the destructive implications of unilateral scenarios and actions violating the U.N. Charter and will refrain from taking steps that can create a destructive precedent for international relations," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said in a written statement. "We understand that the European Union wants to play a more active role in the Kosovo issue, but it is only possible if these conditions are fulfilled," he said. Kamynin said any new international civilian presence in Kosovo would require approval from the U.N. Security Council, where Russia has a permanent seat. Since 1999, the United Nations has been running the Serbian province with NATO peacekeepers, who

still number about 16,000. An EU official, however, denied Russian claims that the EU force would violate existing U.N. resolutions. The official, who did not wish to be named, said the resolutions allowed for an international presence in the province, not necessarily from the U.N. He also insisted that most governments around the world "agree that Kosovo is an EU responsibility." Kosovo's push for independence has been a major factor in the Serbian presidential race. Ultranationalist challenger Tomislav Nikolic faces pro-Western incumbent Boris Tadic in a runoff Sunday. The outcome of the election could determine whether Serbia forges closer ties with the West or drifts further toward Russia. Both Tadic, who was elected in 2004, and Nikolic oppose independence for Kosovo. But Tadic has pushed for Serbia to join the EU, while Nikolic supports closer ties with a resurgent Russia, the Serbs' historical ally. Monday, the EU offered Serbia a package of measures including closer political ties, a free trade agreement, visa liberalization, and cooperation in education as part of a deal to put it on the path toward EU membership. "Serbia's future lies in the European Union," said Dimitrij Rupel, the foreign minister of Slovenia, which holds the rotating EU presidency. "Serbia's drawing closer to the EU is thus crucial." The EU said it hopes Serbia will sign the agreement Feb. 7 regardless of the outcome of the election. According to the EU official, the Kosovo security force will include between 1,300 and 1,400 police backed by prosecutors, judges, judicial personnel and customs officials. Half of the police deployment will be made up of special forces trained in crowd and riot control, the official added. The force, which is entirely separate from the U.N force, will be phased in over a 120-day period to replace the existing U.N. police units as soon as independence is declared, he added.

['Filthy' Israel's days are numbered - Iran](#)

AFP – 30 January 2008

Iran's hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has renewed his verbal attack on Israel, saying its days are numbered and predicting that the "filthy Zionist entity" will fall sooner or later. "I advise you to abandon the filthy Zionist entity which has reached the end of the line," Mr Ahmadinejad today told world powers in a speech in the southern city of Bushehr carried live on the state television. "It has lost its reason to be and will sooner or later fall," he said. "The ones who still support the criminal Zionists should know that the occupiers' days are numbered." The Islamic republic considers Israel its arch enemy, along with the United States, and its hostility towards the Jewish state has deepened since Ahmadinejad became president in 2005. Mr Ahmadinejad has drawn the ire of the international community by calling for the Jewish state to be wiped off the map and describing the Nazi holocaust a "myth". His latest comments come as Iran faces a third round of UN sanctions over its controversial nuclear drive.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[Air Force's most advanced fighter saved for now](#)

CNN – 17 January 2008

The Air Force's most advanced and expensive fighter jet is moving off the chopping block, at least temporarily. The Pentagon plans to ask Congress next month to buy four additional F-22A Raptors beyond the current contract, officials said, backing away from an earlier decision to start phasing out production after this year. Although Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England said the request does not mark a change in the Pentagon's long-term plans, others pointed out that it effectively forestalls a final decision by keeping the jet's manufacturing chain alive. "They've basically left the door open," said John Pike, director of GlobalSecurity.org, a defense research group. "It is further indication that the decision may be reconsidered." The Defense Department says its standing request for 183 F-22s meets U.S. needs. It has faced intense pressure on Capitol Hill to order more. Lockheed Martin Corp. makes the aircraft, with work done in 44 states, including final assembly in Marietta, Georgia. The Air Force also has pleaded for more of the jets, citing its unrivaled combination of supersonic speed, radar stealth and superior air-to-air combat maneuverability. The demand has grown louder recently after the Pentagon grounded its aging fleet of F-15s over safety concerns. In a letter to lawmakers this week, England reaffirmed the Pentagon's F-22 position, saying the military is moving toward the less-specialized F-35 fighter jet. But, he said, "the department is planning to keep the F-22 production line open" by requesting more planes this year to replace "war-related losses" of other aircraft. Despite the reprieve, Republican Rep. Phil Gingrey, who represents the Georgia district where the F-22 is assembled, criticized the letter, saying it is not the clear signal to continue production that Congress and the Air Force want. "How long does it keep the flight line open? One year? Three months?" he said. "I just respectfully disagree with Secretary England in the strongest terms. Hopefully the Air Force can convince them." F-22s cost \$160 million apiece, and almost \$350 million when research and testing expenses are included. Last year, Congress signed off on purchasing the last batch of 60 F-22s under the existing plan for 183 planes. Lockheed Martin is slated to deliver the final units in 2011. The company says the supply chain would begin gradually shutting down later this year without more orders. Restarting production would dramatically increase costs.

[UFOs? Nope. They were fighter jets, Air Force says](#)

CNN – 24 January 2008

Ten Air Force Reserve F-16 fighter jets were the cause of the lights seen over parts of central Texas earlier this month that many believed to be UFOs, according to an Air Force Reserve news release. The F-16s were on a nighttime training mission over the Brownwood Military Operating Area on January 8, near Stephenville, Texas, the statement said. A military operating area is airspace designated for military training, according to Air Force officials. Several people in the area saw lights moving fast across the night sky. The Air Force reported it had no aircraft flying that night, which left people wondering what they saw. Wednesday, an Air Force Reserve statement from the Naval

Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base said it made a mistake in its initial reporting, and that there were planes in the area that night. "In the interest of public awareness, Air Force Reserve Command Public Affairs realized an error was made regarding the reported training activity of military aircraft," the news release said. A spokesman for the Air Force Reserve fighter wing, Karl Lewis, said the error in the reporting resulted from an internal communications problem between offices at the base. Lewis said he received the flight information earlier this week, confirmed it with officials on the base and sent the news release out Wednesday. The release said the planes were in the area between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., about the time many people reported seeing the lights, according to reporting at the time. Lewis said the planes were from the 457th Fighter Squadron based at the reserve base outside of Fort Worth, Texas.

[India showcases military might at Republic Day parade](#)

AFP – 26 January 2008

India showcased its latest military hardware including nuclear-capable missiles during its annual Republic Day parade, which highlights India's military might, technological prowess and cultural diversity and marks its proclamation as a republic in 1950 - three years after it won independence from British rule. India's first woman president, Pratibha Patil, in a speech ahead of the celebrations, highlighted India's new-found economic muscle on the back of a blistering nine-percent growth rate, and sought closer ties with the international community. "The impressive strides of the Indian economy have resulted in the emergence of India as a powerful player in the global economy," the 72-year-old president said. "India is committed to establish(ing) ties of friendship and cooperation with all countries, and India's engagement with the world is intensifying both in the economic and political fields," she said. India rolled out its military hardware - most of it Russian in origin as Moscow is still India's biggest military supplier - followed by marching bands. India, which has fought three wars with Pakistan and one with China since 1947, is the biggest arms buyer among emerging nations amid estimates it could spend up to US\$50 billion until 2018 to upgrade its 1.23-million strong military.

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

[US, Saudi agree on need for oil market stability](#)

AFP – 19 January 2008

US Energy Secretary Samuel W. Bodman and his Saudi counterpart Ali al-Nuaimi agreed Saturday on the need to maintain stability in oil markets, the Saudi ministry said. The two men discussed "the situation in the world oil markets, with respect to supply, demand and the inventory level, while there has been an agreement over the importance of maintaining balance and stability in the market," it said. The Saudis displayed the oil-rich kingdom's plans to increase its output capacity of crude oil, and spoke of the need to increase refining capacity locally and internationally. On Thursday, Bodman said he was touring oil-rich Gulf Arab states to press them to pump out more crude. "In my own view, there is some evidence to suggest that the supplies are less than what we would like

to see them," he said in Jordan before starting a Gulf tour that will also take in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, before going on to Egypt. "The reason that the price of oil is increasing is in part due to the fact that there is a perceived shortage," Bodman said, echoing remarks by US President George W. Bush. During a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia this week and talks with King Abdullah, Bush voiced hope that the OPEC oil cartel will increase output to combat high world prices. Ministers of the 13-member Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which pumps about 40 percent of world crude, will gather in Vienna on February 1 for a special policy-setting meeting.

[OPEC dismisses U.S. calls for more oil](#)

Reuters – 20 January 2008

OPEC dismissed further calls to boost oil output from top consumer the United States, saying the global market is well supplied and the producer group has little control over oil prices near \$90 a barrel. U.S. Energy Secretary Sam Bodman on Saturday urged top exporter Saudi Arabia and OPEC to raise supply on a visit to the kingdom. His appeal came just days after President George W. Bush asked the group for more oil on a separate visit to Riyadh, and less than two weeks before OPEC's next meeting on February 1. "I don't think there is a need to increase because the market is well supplied," Oil Minister Abdullah al-Attiyah told reporters on the sidelines of a conference in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is keeping a close eye on the market and stood ready to pump more when needed, OPEC Secretary-General Abdullah al-Badri said. "If we reach the conclusion the fundamental data warrant an increase in production, then our oil ministers will not hesitate to decree this," Badri told German weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* in an interview published on Saturday. "But at present we see no need for this." Bodman and Bush, concerned about the impact of high prices on the world's largest economy, have said more oil would help ease tight supplies. "It's important there's an increase in supply," Bodman said ahead of a meeting with Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi on Saturday. "The figures would indicate a call for increased supply." A statement from the Saudi Press Agency after the meeting said the two had agreed on the importance of well-balanced and stable oil markets, but gave no further details. Saudi Arabia is OPEC's most influential member and the only one among its 13 members able to boost supply significantly at short notice. The group produces more than a third of the world's oil. OPEC officials say that speculation has divorced the oil price from market fundamentals, leaving it with little power to tame high energy costs. "You have to segregate the physical market from the paper market," Attiyah said on Sunday. "We've checked with our clients and they've confirmed that they don't feel there is a need for more oil. Oil inventories are comfortable." Attiyah said he would meet with Bodman later this week. Last week, he said the producer group needed to be cautious ahead of the seasonal drop in consumption in the second quarter and because of the possible effect on oil demand of a U.S. recession. U.S. crude settled at \$90.57 a barrel on Friday, having fallen from a record of over \$100 earlier this month. Qatar is one of OPEC's smallest oil producers, with output of around 800,000 barrels per day (bpd).

[Beijing mayor vows pollution curbs](#)

CNN – 20 January 2008

Beijing will use the strictest standards to control emissions and curb pollution for the Summer Olympics but it will be an uphill task, the host city's mayor was quoted as saying Sunday. Guo Jinlong vowed to finish preparations for the August 8-24 Games and provide services in "high-level and high-caliber ways," the official Xinhua News Agency cited him as saying. That meant dealing with crippling gridlock and widespread pollution that have been major concerns, he said. So far, Beijing has begun shutting down blast furnaces in the city's biggest steel company to improve air quality. It is expected to enact temporary traffic restrictions to ease bumper-to-bumper traffic and help reduce vehicle exhaust that creates the gray haze that often blankets the capital. Jacques Rogge, president of the International Olympic Committee, told CNN last August that poor air quality could potentially lead to the postponement of certain competitions, such as track and field events.

[Europe planning revamp of carbon emissions trading](#)

IHT – 20 January 2008

European Union officials will propose this week a major overhaul of the bloc's sometimes dysfunctional carbon emissions trading system, aiming to reduce corporate influence and make polluting more expensive. The new system would oblige more factories in Europe to pay for pollution and aims to reduce the oversupply of permits. That, in turn, could push up their cost. It also would be governed centrally in Brussels, rather than partly by member countries, as is now done, with the aim of reducing the ability of companies to profit by lobbying pliant governments for more pollution permits than they need. The draft proposal, seen by the International Herald Tribune, is to be presented to the European Parliament on Wednesday by the president of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso. Lobbying from energy-intensive industries, particularly in high-wage western Europe, still could mean the legislation faces obstacles to approval. The review by Parliament and EU governments could take more than a year. In a concession to governments, national capitals would be allowed to keep money raised by selling permits that could amount to between €30 billion and €50 billion, or \$44 billion and \$73 billion, annually by the end of the next decade, according to EU officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the plans. Governments, however, still could be urged - and may even be required - to put a portion of the revenue toward programs like funding research and development for reducing emissions and encouraging renewable sources of power, the officials said. Those details still are being finalized, they said.

MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

[Sri Lankan troops clash with Tigers](#)

Al-Jazeera – 21 January 2008

Sri Lankan government troops have killed 15 Tamil Tiger fighters in clashes across the front lines in the embattled northern Jaffna Peninsula, according to military officials. Backed by artillery and mortar fire, soldiers pushed into Tiger-held territory and destroyed 24 bunkers early on Monday, the military said. Two of its soldiers were killed. Nine soldiers were wounded, brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara, a military spokesman, said. There was no immediate comment from the Tigers. It was not possible to independently verify the military's claims as the fighting took place deep in the northern jungles, where access is restricted. Both sides often release inflated casualty figures for their opponents while lowering their own. Violence has intensified in the Indian Ocean island nation since the government announced early this month that it was scrapping a six-year-old ceasefire between the government and the Tamil Tigers, a pact that had largely been ignored in recent years. The truce officially ended last Wednesday. At least 36 insurgents and one soldier were killed in weekend clashes across the island's northern region, a flashpoint in the country's ethnic, separatist war. Senior military officials have vowed to dismantle the Tigers' de facto state in parts of the north this year, and to then hunt down those that remaining fighting in the jungle. More than 400 people have been killed in renewed violence across the country since the government withdrew from the truce, according to military figures. The Tigers have been fighting since 1983 for an independent state in the north and east for the country's ethnic Tamil minority after decades of being marginalised by Sinhalese-dominated governments. The fighting has killed more than 70,000 people.

[Japan warship to resume anti-terror mission in Indian Ocean](#)

AP – 25 January 2008

A second Japanese warship left port on Friday to join in the country's anti-terrorism mission in the Indian Ocean. The tanker Oumi left the port of Sasebo to join a destroyer that departed on Thursday for the refuelling mission in support of US-led forces patrolling the Indian Ocean, which was to begin in two to three weeks. Japan had refuelled ships since 2001 in support of US-led forces in Afghanistan, but was forced to abandon the mission last November when the resurgent opposition blocked an extension of the operation. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party forced a law through parliament with its vast majority in the powerful lower house to allow the mission to resume. The new mission will be more limited in scope, restricting Japanese ships to refuelling only boats not directly involved in hostilities in Afghanistan. The limit is aimed at winning over a public wary of violating the spirit of the post-World War II pacifist constitution. Japan had been a vocal supporter of the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition to the Indian Ocean mission, Japan sent a contingent of troops on a non-combat, humanitarian mission to southern Iraq from 2004 to 2006. Before the naval mission was suspended in November, Japan had provided logistical support for six years to forces involved in the war in Afghanistan. It supplied about 500,000 kilolitres of fuel to

coalition warships from the US, Britain and Pakistan, according to the Japanese government. Public opinion polls show Japanese support a greater role for their troops abroad, but not in combat. The Democratic Party of Japan, which took control of the upper chamber in elections last year, has opposed the mission because it says military operations in Afghanistan do not have the explicit support of the United Nations. The party also says the mission violates Japan's pacifist constitution.

[Pakistan troops regain key tunnel in north-west](#)

Reuters – 28 January 2008

Pakistani forces recaptured a road tunnel leading to the volatile tribal belt on the Afghan border after killing around two dozen pro-Taleban militants in a fierce battle, the military said. Militants captured the Japanese-built tunnel on the main road link between Peshawar, capital of the North West Frontier Province, and the tribal belt during fighting near Darra Adam Kheil tribal region on Saturday. The clashes erupted on Friday after militants seized four trucks carrying ammunition and other supplies for the troops. 'After fierce fighting, the security forces have cleared the area of miscreants and are in control of Kohat tunnel and surrounding areas,' a military statement said on Sunday, referring to the garrison town situated on the southern end of the tunnel. 'Reportedly 24 miscreants have been killed, many have fled leaving behind huge quantity of arms and ammunition.' Around 45 militants and two soldiers were killed in earlier clashes. The statement did not say whether there were any losses on the troops' side. Violence has spread across Pakistan, mainly in Frontier Province, after an army assault on a militant mosque in the capital Islamabad in July last year. Hundreds of people, including soldiers, have been killed in suicide and bomb attacks since then. But analysts said fighting in Darra Adam Kheil on the outskirts of the provincial capital, Peshawar, posed a new challenge for President Pervez Musharraf, a ally in the United States-led campaign against Al-Qaeda and the Taleban. Troops are already battling militants loyal to a Taleban commander, Baitallah Mehsud, in South Waziristan tribal region, a sanctuary for Al-Qaeda and Taleban militants. The government says Mehsud is linked to the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto in a gun and bomb attack last month.

[China sends in army to battle snow chaos](#)

AFP – 30 January 2008

China dispatched the army Wednesday to help millions of people stranded by intense snowstorms that have brought transport gridlock, crippled power supplies and hindered relief efforts, state media reported. At least 460,000 troops from the People's Liberation Army and paramilitary forces were to fan out across parts of China afflicted by the worst storms in 50 years which have been blamed for dozens of deaths, various media reported. "The People's Liberation Army has ordered its troops to go all out to help those battling the heavy snow in the southern part of the country," the China Daily said. The mobilisations came amid ratcheted up efforts to deal with the punishing weather, which has paralysed the nation's transport system in vast areas. State-run Xinhua news agency said China was waging "all-out war" against the disaster. Army helicopters will try to reach areas cut off due to the transport troubles and one million police officers have been

deployed to maintain order on congested and icy highways where traffic has ground to a halt, state media reported. At least 50 deaths have been blamed on the weather which struck as tens of millions of people try to return home for the Lunar New Year festival, the nation's most important holiday. A total of 78 million people across large parts of central, southern and eastern China have been affected in some way by the weather, the government has said. Premier Wen Jiabao travelled to hard-hit Hunan province on Tuesday to discuss relief efforts with local leaders. But the national meteorological bureau said Wednesday that heavy snow and icy conditions would persist for several more days, further compounding efforts to help the needy. "Dealing with the current disaster is more complicated than floods, because freezing weather has restricted the mobility of relief forces and most of the affected areas are in mountainous areas," Wang Zhenyao, director of disaster relief for the Civil Affairs Ministry, was quoted by the China Daily as saying. The newspaper warned in an editorial that many areas might not even receive basic necessities. "With much of the transport web disrupted, it will be difficult to have relief materials delivered where they are most needed," it said. "We will have to prepare for a worst-case scenario." Police reinforcements were deployed in many train stations across the affected region as tense crowds waited for train service to resume. The big freeze has sharply raised demand for coal while also crimping distribution, exacerbating an existing reduction in coal output due to the closure of illegal mines and a traditional pre-holiday slowdown. Rolling blackouts would continue in affected regions on Wednesday as local electricity producers ration supply amid the coal shortage and numerous downed power lines, media reports said. On Sunday, Wen ordered all levels of government to prioritise coal supplies to power plants and eliminate all but essential electricity use.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[N. Korea 'not serious' about nukes](#)

CNN – 18 January 2008

North Korea is unlikely to give up its nuclear weapons before President Bush leaves office, a U.S. official said Thursday. "North Korea is not serious about disarming in a timely manner," Jay Lefkowitz, the president's envoy on North Korean human rights, told an audience at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "It is increasingly likely that North Korea will have the same nuclear status one year from now that it has today." Lefkowitz's comments are at odds with Bush administration statements, which tout a recent agreement by North Korea at the six-party talks to abandon its nuclear program in exchange for aid and better relations with the United States as one of its few foreign policy successes. He criticized China and South Korea -- U.S. partners in the talks along with Russia and North Korea -- for not doing enough to push Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear program because of their own bilateral relationships with the North. The United States "assumed that both countries shared our strong desire that North Korea not be permitted to possess a nuclear program and arsenal," Lefkowitz said. "This may have been a misguided assumption." In response to Lefkowitz's comments, White House Press Secretary Dana Perino said in a statement. "Under agreements reached in the six-party

process, North Korea has committed to declare all its nuclear programs and to disable the three key nuclear facilities at Yongbyon as an initial step toward eventually abandoning all its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs. "While it's unfortunate that North Korea has not yet provided a complete and correct declaration, we continue to work with Japan, South Korea, China and Russia in urging North Korea to fulfill its commitments in this regard. We believe the Six-Party framework gives the region and the world the best opportunity to realize the goal of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula."

[Israel suspects Iranians already working on nuclear warhead](#)

AFP – 26 January 2008

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said, in an interview published on Saturday, that Iran is 'quite advanced' in its work on atomic weapons and may already be fashioning a nuclear warhead. 'We suspect they are probably already working on warheads for ground-to-ground missiles,' Mr Barak said in an interview with *The Washington Post* and *Newsweek* magazine. He also suggested that Iranians 'probably ... have another clandestine enrichment operation beyond the one in Natanz.' The remarks were in stark contrast the conclusion of a US National Intelligence Estimate released late last year that said Teheran had abandoned its quest for nuclear weapons as far back as 2003. Mr Barak sharply disagreed with this assessment. 'Our interpretation is that clearly the Iranians are aiming at nuclear capability,' he said. 'It's probably true that ... they may have slowed down the weapons group in 2003, because it was the height of American militarism.' But he said Israel now believed that Iranians 'are quite advanced, much beyond the level of the Manhattan Project.' He did not elaborate. The World War II-era Manhattan Project helped the United States develop the nuclear bombs that were dropped in August of 1945 on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

[North Korean leader says stance on nuclear deal unchanged](#)

AFP – 31 January 2008

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il told a visiting Chinese delegation there was no change in his nation's stance on a deadlocked nuclear disarmament deal, Chinese state media said on Thursday. Kim told the delegation in Pyongyang that nations involved in the deal should fulfil their side of the bargain, the official Xinhua news agency said. But the reclusive leader added that North Korea was willing to work with ally China to try to push for its full implementation. The comments came as a US envoy is due to visit North Korea later this week to try to get stalled talks on the deal to scrap its nuclear programmes moving. The North was supposed to disable its main atomic plants by December 31 and list all its programmes under the six-nation deal negotiated by the two Koreas, China, the United States, Russia and Japan. North Korea has said it submitted a list in November, but the United States says it failed to meet the deadline for a full declaration. The impoverished nation blames the deadlock on negotiating partners for failing to honour their obligations, especially Washington for not starting the process of removing the North from its list of state sponsors of terrorism. Under the deal, the North was also due to receive up to one million tons of fuel oil or equivalent energy aid, but only a small part has been delivered. Washington says it will not move on delisting until

it receives a complete declaration, including a full account of a suspected covert uranium enrichment programme. The North's official news agency earlier reported that Kim met the Chinese delegation on Wednesday led by senior Communist party official Wang Jiarui, but did not disclose their discussions. Kim had lunch with the delegation after a "warm and friendly" conversation, said the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). Wang, director of the International Liaison Department of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, conveyed Chinese President Hu Jintao's greetings to Kim, KCNA said. Wang was also expected to have conveyed a verbal message from the Chinese leader to invite Kim to the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in August, South Korea's Yonhap news agency said. It quoted diplomatic sources in Beijing as saying China dispatched Wang to Pyongyang to balance its diplomacy with the two Koreas.