



RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE 04/2008

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15 February 2008

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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

[Some 250,000 children worldwide recruited to fight in wars – UN official](#)

UN News Centre – 30 January 2008

While precise estimates are difficult to come by, some 250,000 children globally are being recruited to fight in armed conflicts in violation of international law, a United Nations official said today, reporting mixed progress in efforts to tackle the problem. Briefing reporters in New York on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's latest report on children and armed conflict, his Special Representative on the issue, Radhika Coomaraswamy, voiced hope that the Security Council would take decisive action in response to its findings. Children are being recruited by groups in Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda, according to the report. But there have been no recent cases of child recruitment in Côte d'Ivoire, where the parties are taking measures to identify and release affected children for rehabilitation. Sierra Leone and Liberia, which used to have a prevalence of child soldiers, are also no longer contained in the report's annexes, which Ms. Coomaraswamy said collectively amount to a "list of shame." The report draws attention to disturbing trends exacerbating the problem of child conscription, including a close link between camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the recruitment of children. "Research shows recruitment goes down if the camps have good security," the Special Representative said. She also voiced concern about cross-border movements with regard to child recruitment in places such as Sudan and Chad, as well as the detention of children in Burundi, Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, she called attacks on schools, buildings and teachers a "serious new phenomenon" affecting Afghanistan, Iraq and Thailand. The Special Rapporteur welcomed legal precedents for ending impunity, including the issue of arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for five senior members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) operating in Uganda. The rebel group is notorious for recruiting and otherwise exploiting children. Ms. Coomaraswamy said she will push for action in the Security Council, which is expected to discuss the report on children and armed conflict on 12 February. She said the Council should adopt "either a resolution or presidential statement" on the issue. Among other measures, she called for expanding the "list of shame" to include groups responsible for all manner of violations against children, or at least sexual violence.

[Egypt seals gaps in border, Hamas chief in Cairo](#)

Reuters – 1 February 2008

Egypt called in police reinforcements and sealed gaps at the breached border with the Gaza Strip on Thursday. Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal met Egyptian officials in Cairo for talks centered on the "facilitation of movement" and the entry of Palestinians on the border. A senior Hamas official said no agreement had been reached but progress had been made. A senior Egyptian security official said Egypt had given orders to security men to start taking more restrictive measures and was hoping to minimize friction with Palestinians by implementing an incremental closure of the border. The official, speaking

on customary condition of anonymity, said there was still no official word on when the border would be completely sealed. Egyptian forces brought cement and sandbags to seal gaps in the border just over a week after Hamas militants blasted it open to let tens of thousands of Gazans cross to Egypt in defiance of an Israeli-led blockade, witnesses said. Egypt also started blocking Palestinian vehicles from crossing into Egypt although it was allowing supply-laden Egyptian trucks to enter Gaza to drop off goods, witnesses said. One security source said around 50,000 Palestinians had crossed into Egypt on Thursday, and another 20,000 were staying with relatives in Rafah and nearby towns. Egypt was silent on the talks with Meshaal, who Arab media had said was expected to meet Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman to discuss restoring order at the Gaza-Egypt frontier. But senior Hamas official Mahmoud al-Zahar, speaking after Meshaal's meeting, told al-Jazeera television that while no agreement had been reached, some progress had been made. "Hamas does not object to a shared administration of the Rafah crossing with Abbas, on condition that the Palestinian Authority does not succumb to Israeli pressure," he said, referring to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas met Egypt's president on the same issue on Wednesday.

[Support Chad president, says UN](#)

BBC – 4 February 2008

The United Nations Security Council has called on all member-states to back the Chadian government following two days of clashes with rebels in Ndjamena. Correspondents say this will be taken by former colonial power France, which has a base in Chad, as an endorsement of the support it has been providing. But France's Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, later said he did not foresee it launching any military operations. Earlier, thousands of people fled the capital during a lull in fighting. Many crossed the river border with Cameroon via the Ngueli bridge or by using boats. Local officials told the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, that thousands were also crossing at the border town of Kousseri and that more were expected. A plane chartered by the French government carrying 363 foreigners evacuated from Chad arrived in Paris on Monday morning. The Chadian government earlier said it had driven the rebels out of the city, but the rebels insisted they had only made a tactical withdrawal and would be launching a fresh assault. Aid workers have reported hundreds of injuries to civilians resulting from the intense battles near the presidential palace, with bodies lying in the streets. After a late night negotiating session, UN diplomats agreed a statement on Monday morning condemning the attacks by the rebels, who want to overthrow President Idriss Deby, and demanding an end to the violence. The non-binding statement also gave the green light for countries to "provide support, in conformity with the United Nations Charter, as requested by the government of Chad". Chad's permanent representative to the UN, Mahamat Adoum, wrote to the Security Council on Sunday, appealing for countries to "to provide all aid and assistance needed to help it". The US permanent representative, Zalmay Khalilzad, said "the French have the expertise and lead on this issue, and should they decide to do more, they have the support of the Security Council". However, the French foreign minister later said he "hoped" his country's armed forces would "not have to intervene further" to support President Deby. "We do not intend to put French troops more on alert than they are, or to start military operations," he said.

[US should have learnt from UK experience over Iraq](#)

AFP – 5 February 2008

Britain's Prince Andrew, fourth in line to the throne and a declared fan of the United States, feels that post-invasion chaos in Iraq could have been avoided had the US Administration learnt from Britain's experience. In an interview with the Paris-based International Herald Tribune, the 47-year-old prince described the United States as Britain's top ally but added that there were 'occasions when people in the UK would wish that those in responsible positions in the US might listen and learn from our experiences.' Before taking on a full-time role as a trade envoy for Britain, Andrew was in the Royal Navy for 22 years, serving as a helicopter pilot in the Falklands conflict. Because of its imperial history, Britain had experienced much of what the US is going through in Iraq, the prince said. 'If you are looking at colonialism, if you are looking at operations on an international scale, if you are looking at understanding each other's culture, understanding how to operate in a military insurgency campaign - we have been through them all,' he was quoted as saying. 'We've won some, lost some, drawn some. The fact is there is quite a lot of experience over here which is valid and should be listened to.' The prince, who leaves Tuesday on a 10-day US trip to promote British business, said the fallout from Iraq had fuelled 'healthy scepticism' towards what was said in Washington, and a feeling of 'why didn't anyone listen to what was said and the advice that was given.'

[U.N.: Central African Republic troops still killing civilians](#)

AP – 8 February 2008

Government troops in the Central African Republic are carrying out unlawful executions despite attempts by the country's president to end the practice, a U.N. human rights expert said. Philip Alston, the U.N. special investigator on extrajudicial executions, said the number of such killings has dropped since fighting ceased between rebels and the government in the north and President Francois Bozize took steps to end abuses by his troops. He said that the continued practice of arbitrary killings was worrying but that he was cautiously optimistic that things were improving. Alston based his findings on a visit to the cities of Bangui, Bossangoa and Paoua, where he interviewed officials, witnesses and relatives of those killed. New York-based rights group published a report last year documenting 119 cases of unlawful killings by government forces, mostly in the northwest of the country. The Human Rights Watch report said the killings were probably "only a fraction of the total" committed in recent years by government forces in the poor, landlocked country that has suffered decades of coups and rebellions since gaining independence from France in 1960. Alston said that failure to prosecute those troops responsible for the killings has created an atmosphere of impunity in which some Central African Republic soldiers now use lethal force when extorting money or in the course of other corrupt ends. Alston urged Bozize's government to acknowledge its responsibility for the unlawful executions carried out by its troops and to bring individual perpetrators to justice. Alston, a professor at New York University's law school, has worked as an independent U.N. investigator since 2004. The full findings of his visit to the Central African Republic will be presented to the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council in June.

[Pakistan says bin Laden not there](#)

AFP – 9 February 2008

Pakistan has dismissed a senior US official's assertion that Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders Osama bin Laden and Mullah Mohammad Omar were operating from its tribal areas. "The claim by an unnamed official is baseless," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Sadiq, who said Islamabad would take action if the US provided it with intelligence to support the statement. The US official made the comment at a media briefing in Washington overnight, as US Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen was in Pakistan for talks with top military officials believed to focus on counter-terrorism. "There is no question that the iconic leaders of Al-Qaeda - (Ayman al-) Zawahiri, bin Laden - are in the tribal areas of Pakistan," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "We believe that the Taliban's shura (consultation) council leaders led by Mullah Omar reside in Quetta in Pakistan," he said, referring to the capital of rugged Baluchistan province. Mullen's visit followed bloody clashes in the tribal region between Pakistani forces and militants commanded by Al-Qaeda linked tribal Baitullah Mehsud. A top Al-Qaeda operative Abu Laith al-Libbi was killed in a suspected US missile strike in Pakistan's north Waziristan tribal area early this month.

[Senior Taliban figure critically wounded in Pakistan, army says](#)

AP – 11 February 2008

Pakistani forces captured and critically wounded a senior Taliban militant on Monday, the second successful targeting in two weeks of a terror suspect as the government faced growing Western pressure to crack down on cross-border attacks into Afghanistan. The arrest of Mansoor Dadullah, brother of slain Taliban military commander Mullah Dadullah, was a boost for the U.S.-backed campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaida, though it also demonstrated that militant chiefs operate inside Pakistan despite its deployment of 100,000 troops along the border. It followed a Jan. 29 U.S. missile strike on a militant hideout in the northwestern tribal belt that killed Abu Laith al-Libi, a top al-Qaida commander in Afghanistan. Mansoor Dadullah was caught in the southwestern province of Baluchistan, but there was some confusion over exactly how and where. The Pakistani army said Dadullah was wounded along with five militant associates in a firefight with security forces near a village in Qila Saifullah district after they sneaked across the border from Afghanistan. But local intelligence officials placed the clash in neighboring Zhob district, describing it as a raid launched by security forces against the militants hiding at a religious seminary. Western and Afghan officials have long said Baluchistan is used by the Taliban as a base for its operations inside southern Afghanistan. Pakistan has repeatedly denied that Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar is hiding in the Baluchistan capital, Quetta. Despite Pakistan's deepening struggle to contain militancy, Musharraf's administration has had its successes. Dadullah is the latest in a series of high-ranking Taliban militants to be captured or killed along the border in the past year or so, among them Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, one of the two top deputies of Mullah Omar, the Taliban supreme leader. Akhund was arrested in March 2007 in Quetta. Mansoor Dadullah rose in the militia's ranks as an important commander in southern Afghanistan after his brother was killed there in May in a military operation.

Mullah Dadullah was the highest-ranking Taliban commander killed since the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

[Hezbollah chief threatens Israel](#)

BBC – 14 February 2008

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has warned that the militant group is ready for "open war" with Israel, after the killing of one of its leaders in Syria. Nasrallah made the declaration during a fiery speech at the funeral of Imad Mughniyeh in Lebanon's capital, Beirut. There is huge tension in the city, where thousands are attending Mughniyeh's funeral and rivals have held a memorial for ex-PM Rafik Hariri. It is three years since Hariri was killed, plunging Lebanon into crisis. Mughniyeh was killed in a car bombing in the Syrian capital, Damascus, on Tuesday. Correspondents say the events come at a potentially explosive time, with no president and no working parliament. A huge security operation is under way amid fears of clashes between the pro-Syrian Hezbollah supporters and the anti-Syrian Hariri supporters. About 8,000 army and internal security force troops have been deployed, with the aim of keeping the two factions apart. Mughniyeh's funeral, which Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki is attending, is taking place in the Hezbollah stronghold of the southern suburbs of Beirut. Speaking to the crowds of mourners via a giant video screen, Nasrallah blamed Israel for his death and said its war against the Jewish state was not over. "Zionists, if you want this sort of open war, then let the whole world hear, so be it!" he declared. Nasrallah said that Israel thought that Mughniyeh's death "would lead to the destruction of the resistance... but they are wrong". He insisted: "The blood of Imad Mughniyeh will make them [Israel] withdraw from existence." Israel has rejected Hezbollah's claims that it is responsible for Mughniyeh's assassination, but nonetheless has put its embassies and other missions around the world on high alert and boosted troop deployments on the Lebanese border. Security sources said the alert could remain in force for weeks or even months.

TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Twin bombings kill 64 in Baghdad](#)

BBC – 1 February 2008

Two bombs in busy Baghdad animal markets have killed at least 64 people. An Iraqi official said the devices were attached to two mentally disabled women, and were detonated remotely. Friday morning's death toll was the city's highest since violence fell in the wake of a US troop surge in the second half of 2007. Correspondents say a fragile sense of normality in the capital had followed significant security improvements since the troop surge. A ceasefire announced in August by the Mehdi Army militia of Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr, as well as the emergence of local Sunni militia armed by the US military that took on al-Qaeda in Iraq, have also contributed to the sense of security. But that renewed confidence could be shattered by Friday's deadly bombings, the worst to hit the Iraqi capital since three car bombs killed 80 people last 1 August. The blasts came shortly before the call to Friday prayers when many Iraqis were out shopping or meeting friends.

The first device was detonated by a female suicide bomber at around 1020 local time (0720GMT) in the popular Ghazil animal market, killing at least 46 people and injuring a further 80. A popular spectacle for Baghdadis, the animal market only opens on Fridays and regularly draws large crowds, despite having been targeted by bombers twice in 2007.

[Five jailed for helping 21/7 plot](#)

BBC – 4 February 2008

Five men who helped the bombers in the aftermath of the failed London attacks on 21 July 2005 have been jailed on terror charges. Kingston Crown Court heard they had provided the plotters with safe houses, passports, clothing and food. Their efforts enabled the bombers to evade being caught for some time. Muhedin Ali, 29, Wahbi Mohammed, 25, Ismail Abdurahman, 25, Siraj Ali, 32, and Abdul Sherif, 30, all from London, were given between seven and 17 years. Between them, they were convicted of 22 charges of failing to disclose information about terrorism and assisting an offender. Siraj Ali and Mohammed were also convicted of having prior knowledge of the plot to explode devices on the London transport network. The four men behind that plot - Muktar Ibrahim, Yassin Omar, Ramzi Mohammed and Hussein Osman - were all jailed for life last year over the attempted attacks. They had tried to detonate devices on Tube trains at Shepherd's Bush, Warren Street and Oval stations and on a bus in Shoreditch, east London. Scotland Yard Assistant Commissioner Peter Clarke said the two men who knew of the plot before it happened and failed to alert the authorities were "despicable". The others, he added, had contributed to the public's fear of terrorism at that time by helping the bombers escape immediate capture. Judge Paul Worsley QC, sentencing, said none of the men had shown any remorse and they must serve lengthy prison sentences to protect the public. He also said the need for armed police to enter Stockwell tube station on the 22 July when an innocent Brazilian was shot dead could have been avoided if the men had disclosed information about the bombers' identity and whereabouts.

[Millions march against Colombia rebels](#)

CNN – 5 February 2008

Millions of Colombians wearing white T-shirts marched in their homeland and abroad Monday, to demand the country's largest rebel group stop kidnapping people and release those it holds. The idea of the protests against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as the FARC, was born less than a month ago on the social networking Web site Facebook, and more than 100,000 people in 165 cities around the world confirmed their participation. The protests were concentrated in Colombia and Latin American capitals, though there were smaller protests in other places including Spain, Sweden, Hungary, France, Italy, India and the United States. In Colombia's capital, the protest swelled, with long lines of people shouting "Freedom! Freedom!" marching along Bogota's main thoroughfare. Television channels suspended normal programming to broadcast marches around the country, and anchors wore white the T-shirts symbolizing peace. In between reports, the channels aired proof of

life videos of hostages who remain captive in the FARC's camps in the jungle. An estimated 4.8 million people turned out for 387 different events across Colombia, according to police operations commander Gen. Jose Riano. Colombia's government says the FARC is holding more than 700 hostages, including three U.S. military contractors and former French-Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, whom it is trying to swap for imprisoned rebels. Talks between the rebels and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez recently led to the release of two hostages, including Rojas. The FARC have called the march an attempt to bolster the political fortunes of its enemy, President Alvaro Uribe. In neighboring Venezuela, more than 2,000 people wearing white T-shirts marched in Caracas. In Panama, hundreds of Colombians demonstrated, while some 400 people shouted anti-FARC slogans in Argentina. In Mexico City, about 200 people gathered in front of the Angel of Independence monument. More than 10,000 people rallied in Madrid, Spain, according to a statement from the Colombian presidency. In Stockholm, Sweden, protesters bowed their heads for a minute of silence, while a couple dozen people in Hungary protested for an hour outside parliament. There were similar rallies in Paris and London and Washington, New York and Miami.

[Chechen Warns of Islamic Extremism](#)

Washington Post – 6 February 2008

A Chechen human rights researcher is warning that militant Islamic ideology is gaining currency in the Russian separatist region of Chechnya and broadening its appeal elsewhere in the tense North Caucasus. Ousam Baysaev, 43, an author and former journalist who has made a career of chronicling human rights abuses in Chechnya and surrounding republics, presented his conclusions in a lecture in Washington last month at the National Endowment for Democracy. Such findings are likely to cause new anxiety among U.S. and European policymakers already concerned by the unrest in a region strategically important to the United States because of its proximity to Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan. Russia has fought two post-Soviet wars against separatist rebels in Chechnya, including one in 1999 that helped propel Russian President Vladimir Putin to power. While fighting declined in Chechnya a few years ago after the Russian military established a Kremlin-supported government there, turmoil and strife in the wider North Caucasus have spread. In recent weeks, there have been protests in the neighboring, mostly Muslim republic of Ingushetia in response to a government crackdown on political opposition. The demonstrators have risen up against official corruption and the republic's president, Murad Zyazikov, a close ally of Putin. On Monday, Putin visited a military unit stationed in the hills of Dagestan, another restive republic on Chechnya's eastern border. "In those republics, there are metastasizing rebel movements," said Miriam Lansky, a senior program officer for Central Asia and the Caucasus at the National Endowment for Democracy, who moderated Baysaev's talk. "They come to Chechnya, fight for a week or two, and go home having more credibility and status." Lansky, who is completing a book on the Caucasus, said Chechen rebels who subscribed to the strict Wahhabi strain of Islam fought secular nationalists in 1998 for control of the separatist movement. The battles, she said, tilted in favor of the secular

wing of the movement. That changed, she said, when the secular rebel leaders tried to flee Grozny, the Chechen capital, ahead of a Russian assault in 2000. Many were exiled or killed, including a dozen top rebel commanders who died in a minefield. In his lecture, Baysaev showed a slide of a wall to illustrate the shift from secular to Islamic influence within the separatist movement. One slogan that had been sprayed on the wall graffiti-style read: "Freedom or Death." Beneath it was a more recent one declaring: "Chechnya is the Province of Allah." "They perceive themselves as having no outlet," Baysaev said of the rebels, adding that they would probably "take the fight to a broader area" that would include Ingushetia, Dagestan and other nearby republics.

[Pilots stabbed in attack on New Zealand plane](#)

Reuters – 7 February 2008

A woman passenger on a New Zealand commuter plane stabbed both pilots and threatened to blow up the 19-seat aircraft, police said on Friday. The attack on the pilots, who were not seriously hurt, happened about 20 minutes into the flight between the South Island centers of Blenheim and Christchurch, police said. The plane landed at Christchurch, where police with dogs boarded it and arrested a 33-year-old woman, who is originally from Somalia. The woman was in police custody in Christchurch but the motive for the attack was still unclear, Canterbury District Commander Superintendent Dave Cliff told Reuters. "Once the full statements are taken from the pilots and the witnesses we'll be able to get a full picture of what happened, but at the moment we're going through the process," Cliff said. The plane was left on the runway while a bomb squad was called in, but no bomb was found on board, Cliff said. The two pilots were taken to Christchurch hospital but their wounds were not life-threatening. One passenger and the woman were treated for minor cuts. The flight took off from Blenheim at 7:20 a.m. (1:20 p.m. ET on Thursday) and the pilots sent a distress call at 7:40 a.m. The plane landed at Christchurch 26 minutes after the distress call was made. Christchurch Airport was closed to all flights for about three hours after the incident. The 19-seater Jetstream planes are used on short-haul regional flights by national carrier Air New Zealand and have only curtains separating the cockpit from the passenger area.

[US sees shift in Muslim attitudes towards Al-Qaeda](#)

AFP – 8 February 2008

US intelligence chiefs said on Thursday they are seeing some signs that public opinion in the Muslim world is turning against Al-Qaeda. They cited indications that donations to Al-Qaeda are falling off, unusual criticism of the group by other Muslim fundamentalists, and efforts by Al-Qaeda's leadership to reach out to the umma, the body of Muslim believers. The shifting attitudes come despite other evidence that Al-Qaeda has gained strength in its safe havens in Pakistan's tribal areas and are improving their ability to launch attacks in the west. 'We don't know if we've reached a tipping point yet. That's something we're trying to get a focus on to get a feel for it,' said Mike McConnell, the director of national intelligence. But he told lawmakers, 'There are a number of positive signs.' Mr McConnell pointed to the turnabout in Iraq's Al-Anbar province as the most dramatic example of Sunnis repudiating an Al-Qaeda affiliate with a resulting decline in

sectarian violence. Saudi Arabia's forceful response to extremist attacks in 2003 also has exerted pressure on Al-Qaeda and on the flow of donations to it from wealthy Arabs, he said. 'What we've noticed in the past year and two months is that Al-Qaeda has had difficulty in raising funds and sustaining itself,' Mr McConnell said. General Michael Hayden, the CIA director, acknowledged that Muslim attitudes towards Al-Qaeda were 'hard to measure.' But he pointed to a jihadist website's open invitation of questions for Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda's number two, as a possible sign that its leaders are worried about eroding public support in the Muslim world. 'To have people like bin Laden and Zawahiri governing by fiat as to what true Islam is, now being forced into a rather open dialogue with the umma, the body of believers, I think it is a remarkable step, and I don't think reflective of overconfidence on the part of Al-Qaeda now,' Mr Hayden said. Mr McConnell said US intelligence has noted that several Salafist groups, a fundamentalist Muslim branch that emulates Mohammed and his early followers, have recently denounced Al-Qaeda's actions. 'So that is another sign for us that the billion Muslims that practice their faith as good citizens are not for Al-Qaeda and that it's the extremist branch,' he said. On the other hand, Mr McConnell acknowledged that Al-Qaeda has had unprecedented success in uniting Muslim extremists through the Internet. 'If you're even thinking about this you can sit down and find a website and start having dialogue and be recruited. 'So we have seen the group that perseveres in the FATA reach from Morocco all the way across to Afghanistan,' he said, referring to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan where Al-Qaeda has found sanctuary. Nevertheless, Mr McConnell said, 'It's my belief that at some point society will disenfranchise that extremist element and we'll see a tipping point going back in the other direction.'

[UK approves Abu Hamza extradition to US](#)

AP – 8 February 2008

Britain's Home Office on Thursday approved the extradition of Islamic preacher Abu Hamza al-Masri to the United States to face terrorism charges, officials said. Al-Masri, 49, has been charged in the US with trying to establish a terrorist training camp in the northwestern state of Oregon, conspiring to take hostages in Yemen and facilitating terrorist training in Afghanistan. He has already been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in Britain for fomenting racial hatred and urging his followers to kill non-Muslims. Al-Masri was arrested on a US extradition warrant in May 2004, but the process was put on hold while he stood trial in Britain and then appealed his convictions. 'The Home Secretary today has signed an order approving the extradition,' a Home Office spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with department policy. Al-Masri's lawyer, Muddassar Arani, said she would contest the ruling. The Home Office earlier said al-Masri would have 14 days to appeal the order. The Egyptian-born al-Masri - who has one eye and hooks for hands, which he says were lost fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan in the 1980s - was among the most notorious members of the Finsbury Park Mosque, where he served as imam. The north London mosque - described by one British counterterrorism official as a 'honeypot for extremists' - was attended by both Sept 11 plotter Zacarias Moussaoui and 'shoe bomber' Richard Reid. He became a high-profile radical and attracted widespread outrage for comments in support of Osama bin Laden

and for his contention that the invasion of Iraq was part of a wider war on Islam. After he was expelled from the mosque by administrators in 2003, he led Friday prayers on the street outside until his arrest the next year. US officials say al-Masri's activities went beyond motivation and incitement, with New York police Commissioner Raymond Kelly describing him as 'a freelance consultant to terrorist groups worldwide.' Al-Masri is accused of participating in a deadly 1998 hostage-taking incident in Yemen that left three British tourists and an Australian visitor dead and of providing material support to al-Qaida and the Taleban. Prosecutors also allege that al-Masri conspired to establish a jihad training camp in Oregon and sent two supporters to view facilities there. Lawmaker Khalid Mahmood, from Britain's governing Labour Party, said the news was a victory for Muslims across the country. 'This sends out a clear message to preachers of hate - you are not welcome,' he said. 'Those who propagate evil, hate and division cannot be a part of British society.' If tried and convicted in the United States, Al-Masri would carry out the rest of his sentence in Britain before serving any prison term in the US.

[US charges six suspects over 9/11](#)

BBC – 11 February 2008

The Pentagon has announced charges against six Guantanamo Bay prisoners over their alleged involvement in the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US. Prosecutors will seek the death penalty for the six, who include alleged plot mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. The charges, the first for Guantanamo inmates directly related to 9/11, are expected to be heard by a controversial military tribunal system. About 3,000 people died in the hijacked plane attacks. The Guantanamo Bay detention centre, in south-east Cuba, began to receive US military prisoners in January 2002. Hundreds have been released without charge but about 275 remain and the US hopes to try about 80. Brig Gen Thomas Hartmann, a legal adviser to the head of the Pentagon's Office of Military Commissions, said the charges alleged a "long-term, highly sophisticated plan by al-Qaeda to attack the US". He said there would be "no secret trials" and that they would be "as completely open as possible". The other five defendants are Ramzi Binalshibh, a Yemeni, Walid Bin Attash, also from Yemen, Ali Abd al-Aziz Ali, who was born in Balochistan, Pakistan, and raised in Kuwait, Mustafa Ahmad al-Hawsawi, a Saudi, and Mohammed al-Qahtani. Gen Hartmann said the charges included conspiracy, murder in violation of the laws of war, attacking civilians, destruction of property and terrorism. All but Mr Qahtani and Mr Hawsawi are also charged with hijacking or hazarding an aircraft. The charges listed "169 overt acts allegedly committed by the defendants in furtherance of the September 11 events". Gen Hartmann said: "The accused will have his opportunity to have his day in court."

[U.S. agencies warn of female suicide bombers](#)

CNN – 12 February 2008

Terrorists increasingly favor using women as suicide bombers to thwart security and draw attention to their causes, a new FBI-Department of Homeland Security assessment concludes. The assessment said the agencies "have no specific, credible intelligence indicating that terrorist organizations intend to utilize female suicide bombers against

targets in the homeland." But it points out that women have been reported as attackers in the Russian breakaway republic of Chechnya and in India, Iraq, Pakistan, the Palestinian territories, Sri Lanka and Turkey. The notice was distributed Monday to law enforcement officials throughout the United States, and CNN obtained a copy of it. Officials want to make sure security officers are alert to the possibility of female bombers and to familiarize themselves with behavior patterns that such attackers have used in the past. "Even as military and security forces are paying more attention to the use of female operatives, terrorists are adapting their suicide attack tactics to compensate for enhanced security measures," the advisory said. The assessment highlighted the February 1 bombings in Baghdad in which two women, who appeared to have Down syndrome, attacked two pet markets. The attacks forced FBI and DHS officials to rethink a belief that those responsible for such incidents had the mental discipline "to accomplish the operation." The two agencies also echo what experts have said before -- that "female suicide bombers may have an advantage over their male counterparts in accessing targets." For example, the assessment points out women can hide explosives in prosthetic devices that mimic the look of pregnancy.

[Melbourne men planned stadium attack: court](#)

National Nine News – 13 February 2008

A group of Melbourne men planned to bomb a football stadium so they could maximise the loss of life, the Victorian Supreme Court heard today. Led by Abdul Nacer Benbrika, the 11 men were taught it was "permissible to kill women, children and the aged", Crown prosecutor Richard Maidment, SC, told the court in his opening address. "The organisation was exclusively male and exclusively Muslim," Mr Maidment said. "Mr Benbrika was its director and the leader of that group." Mr Benbrika and the eleven men have pleaded not guilty to charges including intentionally being members of a terrorist organisation, and involvement in the fostering or preparation of a terrorist act. Mr Maidment said Mr Benbrika had suggested during taped telephone calls with another man that a bombing attack where the maximum loss of life could be inflicted, such as at football ground, was a suitable suggestion. The prosecutor said that in one of the recorded calls, Mr Benbrika said: "Not just kill one, two or three ... they should do a big thing ... If you kill 1000 the government is going to think ... because if you get big numbers here, the government will act." Mr Maidment detailed other segments of the telephone intercepts which he said included references to the Madrid train bombings where 191 people were killed. Mr Maidment said the organisation drew inspiration from notorious terrorist attacks around the world. He said Mr Benbrika described Osama Bin Laden as "a great man" and told at least one alleged member that "jihad exists here". Mr Maidment said the advancement of jihad was the group's collective intention. "If you die in the cause, you die as a martyr, and that is a desirable outcome in the pursuit of violent Jihad," Mr Maidment said. In addition to the charge of being a member of a terrorist group, Mr Benbrika is charged with directing the group's activities. Fadal Sayadi, 27, of Coburg, Ahmed Raad, 24, of Fawkner, Aimen Joud, 22, of Hoppers Crossing, Abdullah Merhi, 22, of Fawkner, Amer Haddara, 27, of Yarraville, Shane Kent, 30, of Meadow Heights, Majed Raad, 23, of Coburg, Hany Taha, 32, of Hadfield, Shoue Hammoud, 27, of Hadfield, Bassam Raad, 25 of Brunswick, and Ezzit Raad, 25 of Preston are all facing

various terrorism-related charges. The prosecution's opening address is expected to take two weeks to complete. Justice Bernard Bongiorno is presiding over the trial, during which 500 telephone intercepts and recordings to be tendered as evidence. The trial is expected to go for nine months.

[Hamas TV unveils Jew-eating bunny](#)

NEWS.com.au – 13 February 2008

A JEW-eating rabbit named Assud has become the newest star of a militant Palestinian children's television show after the death of his "brother". The Pioneers of Tomorrow children's series produced by Palestinian group Hamas and made famous by a Mickey Mouse-looking character declaring jihad on Israel and the US, introduced Assud the Bunny. Assud - who said in his first episode that he would "get rid of the Jews, Allah willing, and... will eat them up" - replaced his brother, Nahoul the Bee, according to the translation from the Middle East Media Research Institute. An an interview with the program's host, a young girl purportedly named Saraa Barhoum, Assud talked about becoming martyrdom. "We are all martyrdom-seekers, are we not, Saraa?" Assud said on the show. Saraa said: "Of course we are. We are all ready to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of our homeland. We will sacrifice our souls and everything we own for the homeland." According to the program's plotline, Nahoul died because he could not leave Gaza to seek medical treatment from neighbouring Egypt. Nahoul himself replaced the program's original star, Farfur the Mouse, who was "killed by an Israeli soldier".

DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

[The Chinese threat: Act now](#)

Pittsburgh Tribune-Review – 3 February 2008

It's official. National security authorities told a congressional hearing that China's unrelenting spying, cyber attacks and techno-thievery constitute the "No. 1 espionage threat to the United States." Is that sufficient to prompt systemic changes in how the U.S. protects its intellectual property if not its security? Don't be too sure. Some say U.S. counterespionage services are being "overwhelmed." Just last month U.S. intelligence officials reported that the Chinese penetrated a secret National Security Agency listening post in Hawaii. For how long officials wouldn't say. And the cost of Chinese espionage? Larry Wortzel, chairman of the congressional U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, says stolen technology is being employed by the Chinese to produce new, lethal high-tech weaponry. Yet when spies are caught, such as Chinese-born defense contractor Chi Mak -- convicted of supplying embargoed defense technology to China -- cases are hamstrung by outdated spy laws, authorities say. It's like "fighting today's wars with yesterday's weapons," says Rep. J. Randy Forbes, R-Va. So, update the laws. Create better firewalls to protect U.S. government and private-sector networks. And send a zero-tolerance message. Once wrote Robert Frost: "Good fences make good neighbors." It's about time the U.S. had a better fence.

[Olmert names BG Dekel coordinator for Mideast peace talks](#)

AFP – 4 February 2008

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Sunday appointed an army general as head of the peace negotiations division charged with coordinating talks with the Palestinians, his office said. After a meeting with Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who heads the Israeli negotiating team, and Defence Minister Ehud Barak, Mr Olmert appointed Brigadier General Udi Dekel to 'head the negotiations division with the Palestinians,' it said. 'Dekel will coordinate the work related to the peace process with the Palestinians for the negotiating team, will formulate Israel's positions and will take part in the talks on a permanent settlement.' BG Dekel, 51, who currently serves as the head of the army's strategic planning division, will take up his new post 'in the coming days after he is discharged from the army,' the statement said. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators began talks last month on the thorniest issues of the Middle East conflict after the peace process was relaunched at a US-sponsored international conference last November. Both Mr Olmert and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas have said they hope to reach a historic peace agreement by the end of 2008.

[Abbas condemns Palestinian bombing in Israel](#)

Reuters – 4 February 2008

President Mahmoud Abbas condemned a Palestinian suicide bombing in the Israeli town of Dimona on Monday but also levelled censure at an earlier military raid by Israel in the occupied West Bank. "The Palestinian Authority expresses its full condemnation of the Israeli military operation this dawn in (the Palestinian village of) Qabatia just as it condemns the operation that took place today in Dimona," a statement from Abbas's office said.

[US resumes Thailand military aid](#)

BBC – 7 February 2008

The US has announced a resumption of military aid to Thailand, hours after a new democratically elected government was sworn in there. Washington suspended the aid after the Thai military ousted leader Thaksin Shinawatra in a bloodless coup in September 2006. The sanctions were an automatic step under a law banning such aid to nations where elected leaders had been deposed. But funding for counter-terrorism work and joint exercises remained in place. The move came hours after Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej and his new cabinet were sworn in by the Thai king. US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte "certified to Congress that a democratically elected government has taken office in Thailand", state department spokesman Tom Casey said. "We congratulate Thailand's new cabinet on its inauguration, and the Thai people on their success in re-establishing an elected government," he said. The new cabinet is packed with lawmakers loyal to the ousted Mr Thaksin, following victory by his allies in December general elections. Mr Thaksin remains in self-imposed overseas exile.

[Nagorno-Karabakh: Azerbaijan Up For A Fight, But Armenia Unbowed](#)

RFE/RL – 8 February 2008

EU officials touring the South Caucasus this week were confronted by heated words from President Ilham Aliyev, who told them Azerbaijan is ready to "wage war" with neighboring Armenia over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan's recent windfall of oil and gas revenues appears to have persuaded Aliyev that he could turn the tables on Armenia, which has long held the military upper hand in the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, a predominantly ethnic-Armenian territory located within Azerbaijan. In talks on February 4 with Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, who was representing the current EU Presidency, Aliyev indicated Baku was contemplating waging war for control of the disputed territory, which together with a strip of adjacent Azerbaijani territory has been under Yerevan's control since a 1988-94 war between the two countries. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU's external relations commissioner, tells *RFE/RL* that Brussels firmly rejected Baku's "inflammatory" rhetoric. "I clearly said, not only to the authorities, but also at the press conference, that I think it is highly important that they avoid any inflammatory speech at the moment of presidential elections," she says. Both countries are holding a presidential vote this year -- Armenia on February 19, and Azerbaijan in October. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has spent more than 15 years mediating talks between the two sides, has indicated an election year is not likely to see major progress on the issue. Baku, however, appears impatient. The Azerbaijani leadership, Rupel said, appears to feel that "time is not on Armenia's side." Nor is money. Azerbaijan's defense budget this year will exceed \$1 billion; Armenia's is just one-third of that figure. Azerbaijan has enjoyed spectacular economic growth over the past few years. The country's GDP grew by 25 percent in 2007, almost exclusively on the strength of oil and gas exports. Azerbaijan's minister for economic development, Heydar Babayev, says he expects his government to generate upward of \$150 billion in oil and gas revenues by 2015. Armenia, meanwhile, has no lucrative natural resources. It is landlocked, blockaded by neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan, and -- at Baku's behest -- bypassed by oil and gas pipelines, as well as rail and road projects, which originate in Azerbaijan. But, as Rupel notes, Armenia has "alliances that speak for it." This is a reference to Russian backing. Throughout the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russia is rumored to have given Armenia military equipment worth \$1 billion. Russia provides for most of Armenia's energy needs and has bought up most of its energy infrastructure.

[Russian bombers flew over US aircraft carrier](#)

AFP – 12 February 2008

Two Russian TU-95 Bear bombers overflew a US aircraft carrier in the western Pacific at an altitude of 2,000 feet over the weekend, prompting US fighter jets to scramble, a US defence official said on Monday. Four F-18 fighter jets were launched and intercepted the Russian bombers, but not before they had overflowed the deck of the USS Nimitz, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The bombers were flying south of

Japan on Saturday morning when they 'essentially turned inbound toward the USS Nimitz, and USS Nimitz aircraft launched and intercepted the bombers,' said the official. The F-18s escorted the bombers until they departed the area, the official said. 'There were no verbal communications between the Nimitz aircraft or the Russian aircraft,' the official said. The official said one of the Russian bombers flew directly over the US carrier at an altitude of 2,000 feet, while the second bomber flew at its side at the same altitude. It was the second time since July 2004 that a Russian Bear bomber has overflowed a US aircraft carrier. That incident involved the USS Kitty Hawk in the Sea of Japan. The Nimitz, which was on a routine patrol in the western Pacific at the time of the incident, was back on Monday in its homeport of Sasebo, Japan, the official said.

[Ahmadinejad plans visit to Iraq](#)

BBC – 14 February 2008

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is due in Baghdad next month for the first visit by an Iranian president to Iraq, government officials in Iraq have said. Mr Ahmadinejad is expected to meet Iraq's President Jalal Talabani and PM Nouri Maliki during his two-day visit, which is scheduled to begin on 2 March. Iran and Iraq fought a devastating war between 1980 and 1988 in which about one million people died. Meanwhile, Iran has postponed talks with the US on Iraqi security. No reason was given for calling off the talks, which were meant to have been held on Friday. US and Iranian officials met three times last year to discuss how best to stabilise Iraq. It is one of the few forums in which the two countries, which cut diplomatic ties in 1979, have direct contact. "We are happy to sit down for the talks but it's increasingly clear Iran is not," US embassy spokeswoman Mirembe Nantongo said. Iraq and Iran were arch-enemies during the rule of Saddam Hussein, but ties have improved since he was overthrown and a Shia-led government came to power. President Talabani and Prime Minister Maliki both visited Tehran last year. The BBC's John Leyne in Tehran says Mr Ahmadinejad's visit, if it goes ahead, will set the seal on reconciliation between Iran the two countries. An Iraqi government spokesman said the leaders would discuss bilateral relations and joint projects. "It's significant in the sense that Iraq wants to have good relations with Iran," he said. But he added that Iran should not interfere in Iraq's internal affairs, and should respect Iraq's right to have relations with any country it might choose. Iran has been accused by the United States of helping insurgents in Iraq, but the Iranian government insists it is actually playing a positive role there. The US will have to give its tacit approval for Mr Ahmadinejad's visit to go ahead, our correspondent says.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[Pakistan test fires nuclear-capable medium-range missile](#)

The Jakarta Post – 25 January 2008

Pakistan successfully test-fired a medium-range ballistic missile Friday at the conclusion of the army's annual field training exercises, the military said. A statement said that the Strategic Missile Group had launch the Shaheen-1 missile from an undisclosed location.

The nuclear-capable missile has a range of 700 kilometers. Pakistan routinely tests the various missiles in its arsenal, which are designed to match that of neighboring archrival India. The Shaheen-1 missile is operated by the Pakistan Army's Strategic Force Command. Friday's launch was witnessed by army chief Gen. Ashfaq Kayani, who congratulated the troops on achieving "high standards of training and excellent results" during the exercise, the statement said. It quoted Kayani as saying that Pakistan's armed forces were a "highly professional, motivated and well-trained force" and were "capable of safeguarding and securing nuclear assets against all categories of threat." Pakistan and India have a history of bitter relations and have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

[Air Force yet to name pilots for new Sukhoi jet fighters](#)

The Jakarta Post – 26 January 2008

The Air Force has yet to select eight pilot candidates for the Russian-made Sukhoi fighters. A list of potential candidates was submitted by the 2nd Squadron at Hasanuddin Air Force Base in Makassar, an Air Force officer said Saturday. "We are still selecting (the candidates)," said the operational affairs assistant to the Air Force chief of staff, Rear Marshall Eddy Hardjoko. "We can name the pilots as soon as the two additional Sukhoi jet fighters arrive here." The 2nd Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Andi Kustoro, said the eight candidates would be chosen from graduates of the Air Force Academy between 1994 and 2001. "Each class will have one representative with at least 300 flying hours on the fighter types they are currently flying for their own squadrons," he said. "The pilots will then be sent to Russia for one-and-a-half months of ground school." Indonesia currently has two single-seater Su-27SKs and two double-seater Su-30MKs jet fighters. Six more jet fighters are expected to arrive by 2009 to create a complete squadron.

[New Breaching Equipment for Israeli Ground Forces](#)

IDF News – 29 January 2008

A new breaching apparatus that will be fitted on APCs is expected to enter service for the Combat Engineering Corps next year. The new apparatus will be called the 'Hatfan', and will accompany reservist battalion APCs in the field. The general service Combat Engineering battalions that use the 'Puma' armored vehicle currently use an apparatus called the 'Tsafash' whose main vocation is to clear a path through a minefield for other armored vehicles to pass. A battalion using an APC for transport and operations currently cannot carry various breaching apparatus atop their vehicle, and is therefore dependent on an Armored Corps company to bring the apparatus. "The 'Hatfan' is supposed to solve that problem and allow these battalions to be much more independent," explained the Instruction Officer of the Combat Engineering GHQ, Major Meirav Ben Shushan. "This gives them a great advantage as they operate on the battlefield." The 'Hatfan' is currently in use by the US military and has the unique capability of being pulled by an APC deep into the field. It can breach minefields and obstacles, and clear routes for other vehicles to pass. The new apparatus is expected to reach the battalions by the end of the year, and enter service sometime next year.

[Indonesia to develop 2nd generation version of satellite](#)

Xinhua – 1 February 2008

After successfully launching its LAPAN-TUBSAT satellite last year, the Indonesian National Aeronautics and Space Agency (Lapan) is preparing to construct a second generation version of the earth surveillance satellite for orbit in 2010. While the construction of the first satellite took place in Germany, the construction of the next, named LAPAN-A2, will take place in Indonesia entirely under Indonesian engineers, the Jakarta Post daily on Friday quoted Lapan's head Adi Sadewo Salatun as saying. Lapan has scheduled a procurement and component test for the LAPAN-A2 for this year, an integration and satellite test for 2009 and the launch for 2010, Adi said on the sidelines of a seminar on LAPAN-TUBSAT evaluation on Thursday in Bogor, south of Jakarta. Lapan's deputy of its aviation technology division, Soewarto Hardhienata, said the LAPAN-A2 would have an equatorial orbit, not a polar orbit like the LAPAN-TUBSAT. The equatorial orbit will enable the LAPAN-A2 to pass over the archipelago more frequently. The LAPAN-A2 will also be equipped with a navigation system that enables ground engineers to control the satellite's position all the time.

[Six dead as amphibious tank sinks](#)

CNN – 4 February 2008

An aging amphibious tank sank in stormy seas during a military training exercise, killing at least six Indonesian marines and leaving one missing, a Navy spokesman said Sunday. The accident occurred in the Java Sea on Saturday, the final day of a weeklong naval exercise involving dozens of Russian-made amphibious tanks, submarines and warships, said Rear Admiral Iskandar Sitompul. The 45-year-old assault tank sank after encountering three-meter- (10-foot-) high waves off Java island's eastern coast. "The crew could not control the tank because of the high waves and strong currents," Sitompul told reporters after the bodies of the six arrived at Jakarta's air force base Sunday for a military ceremony. Nine marines survived by escaping through the exit, he said.

[Iran fires rocket from space center](#)

CNN – 4 February 2008

Iran fired a rocket from its newly inaugurated space center Monday, laying the groundwork for what it says will be the future launch of its first domestically produced satellite, the semi-official FARS news agency reported. The "Researcher One" rocket is designed to carry a satellite into a low earth orbit. The report said the rocket was launched "into space." But similar previous technological achievements announced by the Islamic republic have been greeted with doubt by analysts. Monday's launch came a short time after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad inaugurated the center Monday, according to the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency. Ahmadinejad said Iran's first step in the field of space technology had been taken wisely and precisely, IRNA reported. "With the launch, Iran has joined the world's top 11 countries possessing space

technology to build satellites, and launch rockets into space," state TV said. In February 2007, Iran announced the launch of "its first satellite into space," the state-run Iranian Students News Agency reported at the time. But the satellite did not reach orbit. Monday's report did not say how high the research rocket had climbed to. Space is considered to begin at 60 miles (100 kilometers) above ground. Ham radio satellites orbit from 100 miles up, while communication, weather and global-positioning satellites fly at an altitude of between 250 and 12,000 miles, according to The Associated Press. Amid fears in the West that Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons, some experts believe Iran's space program is possibly a cover to improve its military ballistic missiles.

[Bush Delivers \\$515.4 Billion Defense Budget Request to Congress](#)

American Forces Press Service – 4 February 2008

A 3.4 percent military pay raise, a 2.9 percent civilian raise, money to continue to grow the Army and Marines and a funding increase to maintain readiness are major aspects of the fiscal 2009 defense budget request President Bush sent to Congress today. The defense budget request is for \$515.4 billion – a \$35.9 billion increase over the 2008 level. The total federal budget request for fiscal 2009 is \$3.1 trillion. Defense officials said five priorities drive the budget request: winning the war on terror, increasing ground combat capabilities, improving readiness, developing future combat capabilities and improving servicemembers' quality of life. The budget funds the operations, training, recruiting and equipping of 2.2 million personnel in the Defense Department. The service portions of the budget are \$140.7 billion for the Army, \$149.2 billion for the Navy and Marine Corps and \$143.8 billion for the Air Force. The request is broken into four major funding areas: military pay and health care; family housing and facilities; operations, readiness and support; and strategic modernization. Military pay and health care would receive \$149.4 billion, with pay and benefits receiving \$107.8 billion and health care \$41.6 billion. Family housing and facilities account for \$23.9 billion, with \$3.2 billion going to privatizing 12,324 more homes for servicemembers. Base realignment and closure costs are set at \$9.5 billion, fully funding 25 base closures and 24 major realignments. The 2009 request also asks Congress to approve \$11.2 billion for training centers and base infrastructure needed as the Army and Marine Corps continue to grow. The budget continues funds for increasing the size of the Army and Marine Corps. Last year, the overall end-strength increase was set at 65,000 soldiers and 27,000 Marines through fiscal 2012. The budget request asks for \$15.5 billion for the Army increase and \$5 billion for the Marines in fiscal 2009. If approved, the increase will boost the Army to 532,400 during fiscal 2009 and the number of brigade combat teams from 40 to 42. The Army's goal is a force of 547,400 with 48 brigade combat teams in fiscal 2012. In fiscal 2009, the Marine Corps will boost its end-strength by 5,000 to 194,000. The Marine goal is 202,000 in fiscal 2011. Air Force end-strength will be set at 316,600, and Navy end-strength will be 325,300. Force readiness will experience a 10.4 percent jump in funding over 2008 if the budget is approved. The budget request is \$158.3 billion, an increase of \$14.9 billion. Operational readiness – tank miles, ship steaming days and flying hours – will remain constant, officials said. The request also includes \$33.1 billion for logistical, intelligence and servicewide support activities. Equipment maintenance is set at \$11.8 billion, while base operations and facilities maintenance are pegged at \$32.6 billion for

more than 5,300 sites worldwide. Training is set for \$7.4 billion, and recruiting is at \$3.3 billion for fiscal 2009. Strategic modernization is set at \$183.8 billion in fiscal 2009, up \$10.5 billion from fiscal 2008. The category includes procurement and research and development. Joint air capabilities account for about half of the procurement, and includes 16 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, 20 F-22A Raptors, 36 V-22 Ospreys, 23 F/A-18 Hornets, 16 CH-47 Chinook helicopters and \$1.4 billion for the Air Force's KC-X tanker aircraft program. On the Navy side, the budget includes money for building the CVN-21 aircraft carrier, a Virginia-class submarine, two littoral combat ships and a DDG-1000 destroyer. Army buys include 119 Stryker vehicles, 5,249 Humvees, 29 M-1A1 tank upgrades, 1,061 heavy tactical vehicles and 3,187 medium tactical vehicles. Spec-based capabilities include more launch vehicles, two space-based infrared systems and advanced, extremely high-frequency satellite and ballistic missile defense.

[3 new 'stealth' warships help boost air defence](#)

Straitstimes – 4 February 2008

Singapore's navy will mark a milestone on Tuesday morning when it commissions three new 'stealth' warships expected to add unprecedented muscle to the country's defences. The 114m-long frigates - Singapore's largest combat vessels - will be armed with anti-aircraft missiles and cutting-edge sensors that allow them to destroy enemy warplanes from up to 15km away. The ships, which are also harder to pick up on radar, are expected to help the navy play a bigger role in air defence, which traditionally falls to the air force. In an interview last week, the chief of the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) told reporters that the ships are part of the country's long-term plan to bolster its maritime defences. 'We can see first, we can decide faster and act first. That enables us to be sure of the outcome,' said Rear-Admiral Chew Men Leong. RSS Intrepid, RSS Steadfast and RSS Tenacious will bring to four the number of Formidable-class stealth frigates in the Singapore navy.

[Feds: U.S. defense analyst leaked secrets to China](#)

CNN – 12 February 2008

A U.S. Defense Department analyst has been arrested and charged with espionage, accused of passing American military secrets to the Chinese government. Court documents unsealed Monday following arrests in two states identify the defense worker as Gregg William Bergersen, 51, of Alexandria, Virginia. Bergersen is a weapons systems policy analyst at the Defense Department's Defense Security Cooperation Agency in Arlington, Virginia. He is charged with conspiracy to disclose national defense information illegally to unauthorized individuals. In an unrelated espionage case, federal authorities in California arrested a former Boeing Co. engineer and charged him with working as an unregistered agent and stealing trade secrets for the Chinese government. "These two cases plainly represent the magnitude of the threat we face," said Kenneth Wainstein, assistant attorney general for national security. Wainstein said the Chinese government is among the most aggressive of foreign powers seeking access to U.S. military and economic secrets. Also in the Virginia case, two Chinese immigrants -- Tai Shen Kuo, 58, and Yu Xin Kang, 33, both of New Orleans, Louisiana -- were charged

with conspiracy to disclose national defense information to a foreign government. Bergersen and Kuo, a naturalized U.S. citizen, are scheduled to appear later Monday in federal court in Alexandria. Kang, a permanent U.S. resident, will make her initial appearance Monday in a federal court in New Orleans. Justice Department officials said Kuo cultivated friendships with Bergersen and others at the direction of an unidentified official of the Beijing government. Kuo allegedly "gathered national defense information on behalf of the government" of China from January 2006 to this month. Separately, the U.S. attorney in Los Angeles, California, plans to announce charges in another Chinese espionage case. A former Boeing engineer was arrested after he was indicted on charges of economic espionage and acting as an agent of China. Dongfan "Greg" Chung, 72, a Chinese native who is a naturalized U.S. citizen, had been an employee of Rockwell International for more than 30 years. He was arrested at his home in Orange County, California. Reached by phone, a woman who identified herself as Chung's wife said that she had no comment. Chung will appear in a federal court in Santa Ana, California, to face charges of providing to China secrets relating to the U.S. space shuttle, the C-17 military aircraft and the Delta IV rocket, a Justice Department official in California said.

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

[Many S'poreans still ignorant about AIDS](#)

Straitstimes – 1 February 2008

Many Singaporeans are still ignorant about how HIV and Aids are spread, a survey has shown.

The survey, which polled 705 people, was conducted by World Vision in conjunction with its One Life Experience (OLE) exhibition on World Aids Day last December. About a third of the respondents believed that HIV and Aids could be transmitted through a mosquito bite or by kissing, which is a myth. Over more than half of them were also unaware that the deadly disease can be spread through breastfeeding from a mother to child. Yet when it came to protecting themselves from catching the viruses, more than 80 per cent of the respondents knew that they could do this by using a condom during sex or having an uninfected sex partner. As part of the OLE exhibition, World Vision has teamed up with the Health Promotion Board to provide free anonymous HIV screening to the public. However, one out of every 11 respondents indicated that they would not be willing or were unsure if they would go for a HIV or Aids testing even if they knew that they would be at risk of HIV or Aids. Half of the respondents also said that they would be uncomfortable around someone with HIV or Aids. Most of the respondents also knew that they cannot contract the viruses by sharing their food with someone who has HIV or Aids but more than 50 per cent of the group would be hesitant to share a meal. To educate Singaporeans on Aids, the OLE allows visitors to experience the fear and stigmatisation that people living with Aids face daily. The OLE is ongoing at the Singapore Management University till Feb 3.

[Tajikistan 'facing catastrophe'](#)

BBC – 6 February 2008

Tajikistan is in the grip of emergency food shortages, the UN's World Food Programme is warning. The deteriorating food situation is part of the energy crisis which hit the mountainous nation in the middle of its coldest winter for five decades. The cost of food has tripled in recent months, partially because of rising world prices. Some humanitarian agencies claim Central Asia's poorest nation is heading towards catastrophe. It's well below zero in Tajikistan, but most people have no electricity, no heating and now, increasingly, many don't have enough food either. One family in the village of Sagdyan, outside the capital Dushanbe, said their four children were surviving on milk and rice. Their next door neighbours could not afford even that. Zlatan Milisic, the country director for the World Food Programme in Tajikistan, says it's not just the rural population that's being affected, but people in the cities too. "We are seeing more and more people who are eating just one meal a day. And we only expect the food situation to deteriorate. This is already a real emergency," said Mr Milisic. He added additional funding was urgently needed to assist the people. Even at the best of times, tens of thousands of people are malnourished. But this winter is affecting a huge proportion of the population. People are spending all they have on trying to keep warm. And the worst is still to come - Tajikistan is currently using up its last energy resources, and it may face a total blackout.

[Russia becomes 'spam superpower': survey](#)

AFP – 12 February 2008

Russia has become a 'superpower' of spam e-mail, becoming the second most prolific country after the United States in producing junk emails, a computer security firm said on Monday. 'The country has stormed into second place, accounting for 8.3 percent of the world's spam, or one in 12 junk mails seen in inboxes,' according to security firm Sophos in its quarterly update on spam email. Between October and December 2007, the United States remained the spam leader, accounting for 21 per cent of these emails, which contained unsolicited marketing pitches and sometimes viruses or other malicious software. But on a regional basis, Asia ranked first with 32 per cent of all spam, followed by Europe at 27 per cent, with North America in third place, accounting for 26.5 per cent of junk email. The 'dirty dozen' spam-relaying countries were the United States, Russia, China (4.2 per cent), Brazil (4.0 per cent), South Korea (3.9 per cent), Turkey (3.8 per cent), Italy (3.5 per cent), Poland (3.4 per cent), Germany (3.2 per cent), Spain (3.1 per cent), Mexico (3.1 per cent) and Britain (2.5 per cent). 'Countries that continually remain among the top spam-relaying countries need to ensure that they are doing more to properly defend computer systems,' said Mike Haro, senior security analyst at Sophos. 'If they continue to sit back as compromised computers spread malicious emails and malware, then hackers will continue to look at these systems as easy targets in their efforts to turn them into botnets,' which can be controlled by hackers. In one of the latest efforts to bypass spam filters, Sophos said cybercriminals sent out their messages with supposed

music files from stars such as Elvis Presley, Fergie and Carrie Underwood attached to the messages. The files actually contained a monotone voice encouraging people to buy shares in a little-known company. 'This spam campaign is a perfect example of how cybercriminals will change their approach and tactics in order to trick users into making bad choices,' said Mr Haro.

[Russia, Ukraine deal averts gas crisis](#)

CNN – 12 February 2008

Averting what could have been another gas crisis across Europe, Russia and Ukraine have fixed a price on natural gas for 2008 while Kiev has promised to pay its 2007 gas debts. The last-minute deal mirrored a similar situation in 2006, when Russia briefly cut off gas supplies to Ukraine over pricing differences. Ukraine is the largest facilitator of natural gas to European Union countries, and the disruption caused shortages in Western Europe. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine President Viktor Yushchenko announced on Tuesday they had reached agreement on the gas issue at a news conference in Moscow following their talks. The Russian natural gas company, Gazprom, had threatened to stop supplying gas to Ukraine on Monday, then extended the deadline until Tuesday evening while talks continued. The two leaders said several other issues between the countries had been resolved, as well. Yushchenko said Ukraine will pay its gas arrears of 2007 and will be a stable transit supplier to Western Europe. A final agreement will be signed in the next few days and payment for gas already used will begin shortly, Putin said. After the gas cut-off in 2006, EU leaders called for solutions that would allow the union to avoid being a victim of disputes between Russia and other former Soviet republics. A consortium of countries banded together to fund the Nabucco pipeline, a \$7.4 billion (5 billion euros) project that will bring gas from Turkey's borders with Georgia and Iran to Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Austria, and then on to Central and Western Europe, according to the Nabucco Web site. Construction is to begin in 2009 on the 3,400-km (2,113-mile) pipeline, and it's expected to be operational in 2013. But Gazprom, along with Italy's ENI, is planning a 900-km (560-mile) pipeline following a similar route to feed into Austria and Italy, a project that would cost between \$14.6 billion and \$17.5 billion (10 billion to 12 billion euros). Last week, the managing director of Nabucco Gas Pipeline International, Reinhard Mitschek, announced that Gazprom may also send gas through the Nabucco pipeline. Critics say the move would undermine the purpose of the project, which was to reduce European dependence on Russian gas.

MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

[Fugitive Jemaah Islamiyah member escapes Philippine raid](#)

AFP – 1 February 2008

Fugitive Jemaah Islamiyah member Dulmatin, who has been linked to the 2002 Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people, escaped a military raid in the southern Philippines, an official said Friday. Soldiers raided a hideout of the Indonesian-born

Dulmatin in the southernmost islands of Tawi-Tawi on Thursday, resulting in a gunbattle that killed Radi Upao, a commander of the Abu Sayyaf, said Lieutenant Colonel Bartolome Bacarro. But Dulmatin escaped, Bacarro said. Dulmatin and his fellow Indonesian JI member Umar Patek have been hiding in the southern Philippines for months, sheltered by local Muslim extremist group, the Abu Sayyaf. Abu Sayyaf and JI have been linked by security agencies to the Al-Qaeda network of Osama bin Laden.

[Germans reject U.S. troops request](#)

CNN – 1 February 2008

Germany insists it will not send more troops to Afghanistan and it will not move them to the restive south, despite a reported request from the United States. Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung said Friday that the 3,200 German troops already in Afghanistan fulfilled Germany's mandate, and that he felt the country was doing enough to support the NATO mission. Jung spoke at a news conference after German news outlets reported U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates had sent a letter in which he "demanded" greater participation in southern Afghanistan. Jung did not speak about the letter's contents, but the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper reported that it was "formal and direct" and written in an "unusually sharp tone." Gates' letter requested a contribution to a reinforcement of 3,200 troops for the NATO mission in southern Afghanistan, the newspaper reported, especially with the helicopter units and paratroopers in the south. Gates' letter "complained about the split in NATO with nations that deny military operations, and nations that don't take part in the military combat against the Taliban and al Qaeda fighters," according to the paper. "Gates speaks of a threatening division in the alliance and warns of a loss of reliability," the paper reported. "He describes the overstretching of U.S. armed forces." Jung said he would not move or increase the number of German troops, who are currently based in the north. "We've agreed to a clear division of the regions we will cover," Jung said. He said Germany was already assisting the NATO mission in the south by flying Tornado reconnaissance planes over the area. "Our emphasis will remain on the north, especially in light of an increased threat level there in the northwestern regions where, when international aid organizations and the army move out, the Taliban have been moving in," Jung said. Pentagon spokesman Brian Whitman said Gates had sent letters to several defense ministers asking them to provide troops to replace the 3,200 U.S. Marines being sent to Afghanistan. "He has reached out to many allies who have capabilities that could backfill" the U.S. Marines, Whitman said. Whitman said Gates was being "frank and direct" in his communications with allies. The issue of burden-sharing in Afghanistan among NATO countries is becoming a key issue, according to a report this week from the Afghanistan Study Group, co-chaired by retired Marine Corps Gen. James Jones and former U.N. Ambassador Thomas Pickering. The report said some nations were contributing more to the fighting than others, and that public opposition to the Afghan effort was growing in some nations. Earlier this week, Canada's prime minister said his country's troops would leave Afghanistan in a year unless another NATO nation sent an additional 1,000 combat troops to the southern province of Kandahar, where Canadian troops are based. The Canadian presence in Afghanistan has sparked controversy in Canada, with some political parties calling for

the troops to come home. Canada, the United States, Britain, Netherlands and Australia are among the countries doing much of the fighting in Afghanistan.

[France moving troops to Chad](#)

CNN – 2 February 2008

The French Defense Ministry said Friday it is dispatching 140 soldiers from Gabon to Chad's capital of N'Djamena as a precaution to protect French citizens after renewed fighting between government troops and rebels. The ministry spokesman said concerns were raised over the safety of French citizens by reports the Chad military had been fighting a rebel force hostile to President Idriss Deby north and east of N'Djamena. A ministry spokesman said because of rebel activity in the former French colony, the decision was made to reinforce the garrison of French troops stationed in the city to "ensure the security of French citizens." The French move came as U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said he is "deeply concerned at the resumption of fighting in Chad." Ban's spokesman said he "deplores any action that could worsen the already grave humanitarian situation especially in eastern Chad where the international community is actively engaged in activities to provide relief and secure the voluntary, safe and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic." On Thursday, after a series of armed attacks in the eastern Chadian town of Guereda, four staff members with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and 28 local and international staff members of UNHCR's implementing partners were relocated to Abeche, about 300 miles to the southwest. Local authorities do not have the necessary means to protect the aid workers, UNHCR said. Only essential UNHCR staff remain in Guereda for the time being, operating in conjunction with refugee leaders at two camps, Mile and Kounoungou, where up to 30,000 Darfurian refugees reside. Speaking from Abeche, UNHCR spokeswoman Annette Rehl described Guereda as "a place without law and order (where) people act with impunity." She cited car-jacking as the most pressing security concern there: "They need cars and telecommunications equipment." The situation was brought to a head by tensions that have been brewing in the area since Monday between opposition forces and the Chadian National Army. She also referred to clashes between two ethnic groups, the Zaghawas and the Tamas, as affecting the local population. Security concerns for refugees in Guereda remain high. "If humanitarian workers are not around, it is impossible to provide adequate protection to the refugees," said Jorge Holly, head of the UNHCR field office in Guereda "But the situation here is getting out of control, and we also have to protect our staff and partners." The U.N. refugee agency has 12 refugee camps, six field offices and over 200 employees in eastern Chad. Asked when UNHCR staff would return to the camps, Rehl said, "We need to see how the situation moves, we are having security meetings. We have to see what happens in the political context. Tomorrow this could change. This is typical of Chad."

[Progress in deployment of Darfur force priority for Security Council – President](#)

UN News Centre – 4 February 2008

The deployment of the hybrid United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission (UNAMID) to the strife-torn Sudanese region of Darfur will be among the major issues taken up by the Security Council this month, its President said today. This Friday, the Council will have a public meeting to hear the presentation of the Secretary-General's latest report on UNAMID, rather than just consultations as per the norm. "The aim is to bring greater awareness of the entire membership of the situation that is taking place in Sudan and the difficulties that, at this point, the mission is finding," Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias of Panama, which holds the Council's rotating presidency for this month, said at a press briefing in New York. Although the mission is now in operation in Darfur, where more than 200,000 people have been killed and 2.2 million others forced to flee their homes since fighting began in 2003 between Government forces and rebel groups, many outstanding issues remain between UNAMID and the Government. In addition, UNAMID – which at full deployment is expected to have some 26,000 troops and police officers – still lacks essential logistics and equipment, including helicopters. Last week Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir agreed on the need to accelerate UNAMID's deployment during a meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the sidelines of the African Union (AU) summit. Mr. Ban is expected to brief the Council tomorrow on his meeting with the AU, as well as the other stops on his recent trip.

[Amnesty warning over Sri Lanka](#)

CNN – 8 February 2008

Sri Lanka's military said it destroyed six Tamil Tiger rebel bunkers during clashes that killed five guerrillas and one soldier, while a rights group warned that violence is escalating. Soldiers attacked the rebel bunkers in their northern front lines in Muhamalai and Nagarkovil villages on Thursday and the two sides exchanged gunfire for about a half-hour, a defense official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media. Five rebels and one soldier were killed, he said. Clashes across three northern fronts Wednesday killed 23 rebels and wounded 11 soldiers, the official said. Meanwhile, Amnesty International warned that violence by Sri Lankan authorities is escalating and said "threats to the media and media freedoms have increased dramatically."

[Sudan bombs rebel forces in Darfur](#)

AP – 8 February 2008

The Sudanese military said it bombed three towns in West Darfur while striking at rebel forces Friday as senior U.N. officials warned that security was deteriorating dramatically in Sudan's vast western region. The U.N. officials told the Security Council that intensified fighting has worsened the plight of civilians and is hurting chances for a political settlement in the five-year conflict. Darfur rebels denied any of their fighters were in the towns attacked by the government and said some 200 people were killed. They said helicopter gunships and fixed-wing aircraft battered Sirba, Sileia and Abu Suruj, setting buildings on fire and causing thousands to flee. "The government attacked using aircraft bombardment, troops and janjaweed (Arab militiamen)," said Abdelaziz

Ushar, a senior commander with the rebel Justice and Equality Movement. Sudan's Arab-dominated government has been accused of unleashing janjaweed forces to commit atrocities against Darfur's ethnic African communities in the fight with rebel groups. At least 200,000 people have been killed and 2.2 million displaced since the fighting began five years ago. The Sudanese army said its attacks forced rebels to retreat into neighboring Chad, a provocative accusation at a time of escalating tension between the two countries. Both nations accuse each other of hosting hostile rebel groups, allegations that became even more sensitive after Chadian rebels attacked Chad's capital last weekend. Sudan's "armed forces were able to repulse rebels from the Darfur rebel movements who have retreated into Chadian territories, leaving behind a huge number of dead, wounded and equipment that is currently being counted," the army spokesman, Brig. Osman Mohamed al-Aghbash, said in a statement carried by the country's official news agency. The commander of a joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping force that has begun deploying in Darfur to try to stem violence called on the government to halt attacks. In New York, U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean-Marie Guehenno and the top U.N. political mediator in Darfur, Jan Eliasson, painted a grim picture of a worsening conflict a year after the U.N. and African Union launched a new effort to get a political settlement. Eliasson urged the Sudanese government and all rebel groups to "unilaterally declare and respect a cessation of hostilities." He urged the Security Council and countries with influence with the two sides to send a message that the fighting must stop. The deployment of just 9,000 of the expected 26,000 troops and police in the AU-U.N. force and the continued tensions between Chad and Sudan have also had "detrimental consequences for the Darfur political process," he said. Key rebel leaders boycotted peace talks convened in Sirte, Libya, in October, but Eliasson and his African Union counterpart, Salim Ahmed Salim, have been working intensely with the various factions to get agreement on a new session. More than a dozen rebel movements have now coalesced into five groupings, but there are still unresolved leadership issues and the rebels still have to prepare for negotiations, Eliasson said.

[African Union-United Nations Hybrid Force in Darfur severely under-resourced to protect civilians, Peacekeeping Chief warns Security Council](#)

UN Security Council News – 8 February 2008

The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) was "severely under-resourced" to fulfil its mandate to provide adequate protection, given the deteriorating security environment there, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told the Security Council today. Mr. Guéhenno, who had travelled to the region from 21 to 31 January in order to visit the new operation in the weeks following transfer of authority from the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS), briefed the Council on the situation in the violence-torn region of Darfur, along with Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur, and Lila Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer for the African Union to the United Nations. "The number of troops, police, and their enabling capabilities currently in the mission area are simply not sufficient," he said. However, the Mission was doing its utmost to adopt a more proactive posture, especially in the camps for the internally displaced persons, but it was important to stress that the Mission would not be able to meet the high

expectations of Darfur's civilians, and that could deal a debilitating blow to the Organization's efforts. He said that the continued hostilities in Darfur served as a stark reminder that some parties to the conflict were still not prepared to lay down their weapons and commit to the path of dialogue. The Council, therefore, must be prepared for the eventuality that UNAMID would be forced to operate in an environment of continued hostilities. To bolster the force, a definitive decision from the Government of the Sudan on the inclusion of the Thai and Nepalese units was urgently required. Progress had been made on the status-of-forces agreement, but a number of matters remained unresolved, including the full freedom of movement for UNAMID and visas for contractors. In addition, UNAMID still lacked critical air and ground transportation assets. Reviewing political progress since the first phase of peace talks that opened in Sirte, Libya, on 27 October 2007, Jan Eliasson, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Darfur, said that he and Salim Ahmed Salim, his African Union counterpart, had been working intensively with the parties in preparation for substantive talks. They had made some progress, but they had also faced a deteriorating security situation and resurgent instability in Chad. Those problems had been compounded by UNAMID's slow deployment, undermining chances to assure the people of Darfur of security.

[Guinea-Bissau at a 'turning point,' says UN peacebuilding official](#)

UN News – 8 February 2008

The engagement of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in Guinea-Bissau comes at a "turning point" for the West African nation that is trying to consolidate peace after a brutal civil war in which thousands were killed, wounded or forced from their homes. Reporting on her recent two-day visit to the country, Maria Luiza R. Viotti – chair of the PBC's country-specific configuration on Guinea-Bissau and Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN – said that improvements are necessary in several areas, including security, fiscal management, combating drug trafficking, youth vocational training and election assistance. There is a "clear window of opportunity" for the Commission, an advisory body which seeks to assist countries emerging from conflict from sliding back to war, in Guinea-Bissau, she noted as she briefed PBC members in New York. While in the country, Ms. Viotti met with Government authorities, civil society groups and representatives from the private sector and international organizations to determine the PBC's next steps. Last December, Guinea-Bissau became the third country on the Commission's agenda, joining Burundi and Sierra Leone, after the Security Council backed a request from the country, which has been beset by problems stemming from drug trafficking and organized crime.

[Australian troops arrive in Timor Leste](#)

Reuters – 12 February 2008

Australian troops began arriving in Timor Leste on Tuesday to begin enforcing a two-day state of emergency declared after a double assassination attempt that left its president in hospital with triple gunshot wounds. 'The C-130 aircraft are arriving by the hour. The troops will bolster forces already there,' said a spokesman for Australian Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon. An Australian warship also arrived off the Dili coast on

Tuesday to support the first of 200 fast reaction troops sent to reinforce international security forces as doctors said President Jose Ramos-Horta would remain on life support until next week. In the capital Dili, Timor Leste's interim president Vicente Guterres declared a state of emergency and appealed for calm, after apparently coordinated attacks against the president and prime minister threw the young nation into a fresh crisis. Mr Guterres said meetings and protests were banned, and all citizens must stay home between the hours of 8pm and 6am. Around 1,600 United Nations police, backed by around 1,000 Australian soldiers, were patrolling Dili and other cities amid fears of fresh violence by rebel soldiers, whose leader Alfredo Reinado was killed in the surprise pre-dawn assault.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[Musharraf rejects nuke concerns as Pakistan tests missile: army](#)

AFP – 1 February 2008

President Pervez Musharraf accused Pakistan's enemies on Friday of spreading fears about the country's atomic weapons, as the military test-fired a nuclear-capable missile, the army said. Mr Musharraf's comments came amid mounting concern in the West about whether the politically unstable South Asian nation's estimated 50 warheads are safe from Al-Qaeda and Taliban militants. 'We have taken note of various imaginary scenarios being propounded by those who do not wish Pakistan well. Such elements have never reconciled to a nuclear Pakistan,' an army statement quoted Mr Musharraf as saying. Mr Musharraf said Pakistan was capable of thwarting all threats to its sovereignty and nuclear capability, and urged 'such elements' to be cautious, according to the statement. He made the comments after witnessing the launch of the intermediate-range Ghari (Hatf V) missile. The missile, which has a range of 1,300 kilometres, was launched at the end of annual field training exercises. Army chief Ashfaq Kiyani, who replaced Mr Musharraf as head of the military in November, senior military officers and scientists also witnessed the test, the statement said. Kiyani made similar comments at the launch of another missile a week ago when he dismissed 'unrealistic' fears that Pakistan's nuclear warheads could fall into the wrong hands. Mr Musharraf congratulated the team behind the latest launch on 'achieving high standards of training and excellent results'. 'The nation has developed a strong nuclear deterrence capability and expects that officers and men entrusted with the task of deterring aggression would continue to train hard and maintain professional excellence,' he said. Pakistan and its regional rival India make frequent missile test launches. The two countries have fought three wars since 1947 and carried out tit-for-tat nuclear test detonations in 1998.

[Thailand opens study on possible nuclear plant](#)

AFP – 1 February 2008

Thailand has launched a three-year study to decide whether the kingdom should build a nuclear power plant to meet its growing energy needs, a top energy official said on Friday. The study, which will cost about 1.8 billion baht (\$\$77.2 million), will include a

survey of potential sites, developing safety regulations and a public education campaign, said Mr Kopr Kritaykirana, an advisor to the project. The research is being undertaken by the new Nuclear Power Program Development Office, which was officially opened by the energy ministry on Thursday, he said. If the new government embraces the plan, construction of a nuclear power plant could begin by 2014, he said. Nuclear power has recently gained support from Thailand's business and industrial interests, which see it as a reliable domestic source of energy. Thailand imports most of its energy needs, leaving the country particularly vulnerable to shifts in energy prices. Mr Piyasvasti Amranand, the outgoing energy minister in a military-installed government, has enthusiastically promoted nuclear energy. A new elected government is expected to take office next week. Currently Thailand relies on natural gas for about two thirds of its electricity production. The rest comes mainly from coal and hydropower. Demand is higher than Thailand's production capacity, forcing the kingdom to import electricity from neighbours like Laos and Malaysia.

[Defence secretary calls for greater international engagement in nuclear disarmament](#)

UK Ministry Of Defence News – 5 February 2008

Defence Secretary Des Browne today offered to host a conference of all five recognised nuclear weapon states to address the difficult technical challenges of verifying nuclear disarmament. He made this offer at a major speech to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on Tuesday 5 February. Des Browne, Secretary of State for Defence, said: "For the first time, I am proposing to host a conference for technical experts from all five recognised nuclear states, to develop technologies for nuclear disarmament. At the centre of this offer are the skills and expertise of UK scientists at the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Those skills will form the basis of pioneering technical research into nuclear disarmament - to become a 'nuclear disarmament laboratory'." As part of his speech, Des Browne highlighted disarmament that has already been achieved and the need to have a forward plan for a world free of nuclear weapons in order to maintain global support for countering nuclear proliferation. He said: "Despite significant reductions in stockpiles since the Cold War, there remain thousands of nuclear warheads worldwide. The proliferation of nuclear material, technology and weapons represents a grave threat to international security. These challenges require a global solution. The international architecture to promote disarmament and counter proliferation is extensive, but still not sufficient. So we must continue to address these threats internationally. Every nation, both with and without nuclear weapons, needs to contribute to this effort. Nuclear Weapons States must show forward commitment to disarmament in order to maintain broad support from the Non-Nuclear Weapons States on countering proliferation. As one of the five recognised nuclear weapons states, the UK has made a significant contribution to countering proliferation, but this cannot be a unilateral approach. In the current circumstances, we cannot undermine our own national security. In renewing our own nuclear deterrent, we clearly set out our position in the 2006 White Paper as maintaining "minimum deterrence". The UK is determined to have a world free of nuclear weapons. But to get there we must first create an international environment that better supports

disarmament. The UK has and will continue to pursue this until nuclear weapons no longer exist."

[Russia suspicious over Iran test](#)

BBC – 6 February 2008

Russia thinks the launch of an Iranian rocket into space raises suspicion over the true aim of its nuclear programme, a foreign ministry official has said. "Long-range missiles are one of the components of a [nuclear] weapons system," Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov told Interfax. Therefore Monday's test launch of Iran's Explorer-1 space rocket was "of course, a cause for concern", he said. Iran insists its nuclear programme is purely for peaceful energy production. Correspondents say the statement by Mr Losyukov appeared to indicate that Moscow increasingly shares Western concerns about Tehran's nuclear course. "It increases suspicion of Iran regarding its possible desire to create a nuclear weapon," he was quoted as saying. Iran said the rocket which was test-fired would be used to launch research satellites. The US State Department said the launch was "troubling", as it was an example of the same technology behind long-range ballistic missiles. In the past, Russia has been more sceptical than some Western powers about Iran's missile capability, saying it would take a long time to build long-range missiles.

[ElBaradei says greatest danger comes from atomic weapons in hands of extremist groups](#)

AP – 9 February 2008

U.N. nuclear watchdog chief Mohammed ElBaradei said Saturday that the biggest danger facing the world is the risk of extremist groups obtaining atomic weapons, not new nuclear states. Urging a reduction of the world's nuclear stockpile and better controls, the International Atomic Energy Agency director general said that if an extremist group managed to get a hold of nuclear weapons, it would use them. "This, to me, is the most danger we are facing today," he told a conference of the world's top defense officials. "Any country, even if they have nuclear weapons ... will know that if they use nuclear weapons they will be pulverized." But extremist groups, he said, "If they have it, they will use it. We need to be aware this is the No. 1 security threat we are facing." ElBaradei added as a note of caution that it was hard to determine whether nuclear materials were ending up with extremist groups, given the state of the system of international controls. "A lot of the material that is reported stolen is never recovered; conversely a lot of the material recovered has never been reported stolen," he said. On Iran, ElBaradei said the international community should quickly engage in talks with Tehran to secure guarantees that its nuclear program will not be used to develop weapons. "Confidence can only be built through direct negotiations," he said. U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman said that Iran remained the world's top arms control challenge, and it would be a "profound mistake" to focus on the recent U.S. "national intelligence estimate" that suggested Iran no longer had a nuclear weapons program. "Although the NIE reported that Iran's covert work on bomb

design may have been temporarily suspended in 2003, it also said — far more importantly — that Iran's overt work on enrichment continues apace."

[Ahmadinejad vows to never give up nuclear programme](#)

AP – 12 February 2008

Hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad struck a defiant tone as he spoke to giant crowds marking the 29th anniversary of the Islamic revolution on Monday, vowing never to slow down Iran's nuclear development and announcing plans for more rocket launches in his country's space program. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators marched through the capital Teheran, chanting 'Death to America' and burning effigies of U.S. President George W. Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Mr Ahmadinejad's speech before the crowd appeared aimed at showing an image of strength of his hard-line camp ahead of key parliament elections in mid-March. In Teheran, Mr Ahmadinejad vowed to push ahead with both the nuclear and space programme and rallied Iranians against UN Security Council demands that Iran stop enriching uranium. Like Iran's nuclear activities, the country's space programme has provoked unease abroad because the same technology needed to put satellites into space can be used to deliver warheads. Iranian officials have insisted both programmes are intended for peaceful purposes. The US has led the push for a third round of UN sanctions against Iran for refusing to halt uranium enrichment, a technology that can be used to produce nuclear fuel or material for an atomic bomb. Last month, the five permanent Security Council members - the US, Russia, China, Britain and France - agreed on a draft resolution for new sanctions. Mr Ahmadinejad said on Monday that Iran won't be frightened by the threat of more sanctions. He also warned the Security Council that it risked losing its credibility. The Iranian president also said Iran will launch two more research rockets into space before putting the first Iranian-made satellite into orbit hopefully by this summer. Earlier this month, Iran said it launched its first research rocket into space and unveiled its first major space centre and indigenous satellite - called Omid, or Hope. The US called the Feb 4 rocket launch 'just another troubling development', saying it was a cause for concern about Iran's continuing development of medium- and long-range missiles. Despite the anxiety over Iran's space programme, it is not exactly clear how developed it is, and analysts have expressed doubts about such technological achievements announced by the country in the past. On Monday, Mr Ahmadinejad offered the first details about the Feb 4 launch, saying the first section of the rocket - called Kavoshgar-1, or Explorer-1 - detached after 90 seconds and returned to earth with the help of a parachute. The second segment entered space for about five minutes, he said, while the final section was sent 'toward' orbit to collect information to determine the best future route for the Omid satellite. Iran has said it wants to put its own satellites into orbit to monitor natural disasters in the earthquake-prone nation and improve its telecommunications. Iranian officials also point to America's use of satellites to monitor Afghanistan and Iraq and say they need similar abilities for their security. In 2005, Iran launched its first commercial satellite on a Russian rocket, in a joint project with Moscow, which appears to be the main partner in transferring space technology to Iran.