



RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE 08/2008

The Foremost Inter-Disciplinary Defence E-Bulletin

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11 April 2008

Contemporary Conflict

- Taliban leader vows renewed attacks
- Afghan Security Forces Training Makes Headway, Despite Trainer Shortfalls
- Islamists gain ground in Somalia
- Taliban welcomes offer of talks
- Top Taleban leader 'is arrested'
- Afghanistan, Pakistan open Khyber Border Coordination Center
- General's advice to suspend troop cuts reflects bleak assessment of Iraq military
- Afghans hold secret trials for men that U.S. detained

Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism

- Al-Qaeda grooming militants who 'look western': CIA
- Al-Qaeda deputy defends attacks
- Al Qaeda No. 2: We don't kill innocents
- Britain says 8 men planned to bring down airliners with bombs
- Pirates seize French yacht
- 8 civilians killed, 22 wounded in suicide attack in southern Afghanistan
- China 'uncovers Olympic terror plot'

Diplomacy & Defence Strategy

- Saudi Arabia slams Syria over Lebanon crisis
- Chinese view of Dalai Lama bodes ill for its Tibet policy
- N. Korea testing South with jet fighters
- U.S. backs plan for new Kosovo army
- France to send battalion to Afghanistan

- Bush Pushes NATO Acceptance of Three Balkan Nations
- Allies upset as Bush moves off NATO script
- North Korea: Seoul is driving relationship to 'catastrophe'
- U.S. wins NATO backing for missile defense shield
- ISAF nations affirm long-term commitment to Afghanistan
- U.S. May Send More Troops to Afghanistan in 2009, Gates Says

Defence Technology

- S'pore Navy's first surface-to-air missile firing a success
- B-1 bomber burns after landing in Qatar
- Men with 'highly sensitive' cameras arrested at airport

Non-Traditional Security

- Vietnam and India move to limit rice exports
- European Union, NATO to tackle cybercrime
- Bird flu can mutate to infect humans
- Thousands hit by Brazil outbreak of dengue
- Global temperatures 'to decrease'

Military / Peacekeeping / Humanitarian Operations

- Iraqi PM Declares Military Operation in Basra a 'Success'
- Brazilian military joins battle against dengue epidemic
- Palestinian boy killed in fighting in Gaza - medics

Nuclear Proliferation

- US, N. Korea plan secret document to end nuclear impasse
- US awaits overdue nuclear declaration from N.Korea

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

Taliban leader vows renewed attacks

al-Jazeera – 22 March 2008

A Taliban commander who has been in hiding for seven years has broken his silence in a video given to TV networks. Jalaluddin Haqqani, appearing frail but defiant in the video aired on Al Jazeera on Saturday, vowed a renewed campaign in Afghanistan against US and Nato "invaders". The video shows more than one attack, including what is believed to be a Taliban suicide bombing of an American compound in Afghanistan, alongside a taped message by Haqqani. "The Americans said the Taliban was beaten and defeated but we are not defeated," said Haqqani in the video. "It was our tactical plan to fade away and prepare for a guerrilla war." He added: "We will defeat [George] Bush [the US president] and continue our jihad until doomsday." Because he remained silent for seven years, many had assumed Haqqani was dead and rumours to that effect had circulated in the international media. Haqqani is the head of the Taliban in south eastern Afghanistan, along the border area with Pakistan's North and South Waziristan. Al Jazeera's Kamal Hyder, reporting from Pakistan, said the video had prompted serious concern among Pakistani authorities, seen as allies to Washington in its fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. "This is a senior Taliban commander, in the past seven-and-a-half years nobody has seen him, now he's promising an intensified campaign that is likely to have its effects on the Pakistani tribal areas [the Waziristan region]," said Hyder. Meanwhile, Nato officials said that a bomb blew up a military vehicle and killed two soldiers with the US-led coalition in the southern province of Kandahar on Friday. More than 30 international soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan this year, most of them by the Taliban. The Afghan interior ministry also announced that security forces had killed three Taliban "commanders" and two of their bodyguards in operations in the southern province of Uruzgan late last week. It did not identify the "commanders". General Mohammad Ayob Salangi, the police chief of the northern province of Kunduz, said a commander of the highway police in the northern province of Kunduz was shot dead in an ambush late Friday. He blamed the Taliban. Haqqani is one of the most well known Taliban leaders and is believed to be the brains behind the the group's current attacks on US and coalition forces in Afghanistan. "He is very well respected in his home province of Paktia [in Afghanistan]. In fact, Haqqani was the man who started the campaign after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan," said Hyder. Haqqani's three sons are known to help lead his network of fighters, including Taliban and foreign fighters associated with al-Qaeda. The group has claimed responsibility for several attacks in the past, including one on a luxury hotel in Kabul, the Afghan capital, in January which killed seven people.

Afghan Security Forces Training Makes Headway, Despite Trainer Shortfalls

American Forces Press Service – 28 March 2008

Progress in training and equipping Afghan national security forces has been "pretty astounding," but could proceed faster if not for a shortfall in military trainers, the task force commander overseeing the effort told Pentagon reporters today. Army Brig. Gen.

Robert E. Livingston, commander of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, described momentum built during the past six months to bring training opportunities for Afghan police more on line with that being provided to the Afghan army. Police mentor teams were dispatched into the districts of Afghanistan's provinces during the summer, with big results, he said. Two major initiatives are paying off as well. A focused district development plan is delivering intensive training to eight police districts at a time, with the goal of reaching all 395 districts within the next four years. In addition, 15 small training centers have been established around the country to provide a "training surge" of intensive police mentoring and individualized training. As police training accelerates, the Afghan army is making great strides, Livingston said. Its numbers have climbed to almost 50,000, with three additional brigades now in the force structure. More than 7,000 noncommissioned officers were added to the ranks during the past year. Problems that plagued the Afghan army are being corrected as well, Livingston said. The "away without leave" rate has dropped from 18 percent to less than 8 percent, and the "present for duty" rate has increased from 55 percent to more than 85 percent. As promising as these developments are, Livingston said, they could move ahead faster if not for a shortfall of about 3,500 military trainers. Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix stands at 53 percent of its authorized strength. Even with the influx of about 1,000 U.S. Marines from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, to serve as trainers in the southwestern districts, Livingston said the task force will continue to operate with severe shortages. The United States currently provides about 65 percent of all Afghan army trainers and most of the police trainers. The second-largest international contributors are Canada and Great Britain. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has raised the issue repeatedly during meetings with his NATO counterparts and is expected to urge greater NATO contributions again during next week's NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania. "We certainly need more international participation," Livingston said. The task force is dealing with the problem by using scaled-down training teams for the army, but can't stretch enough to do the same for the police. "The police effort is not moving as fast as we would like it to because of the shortage of trainers," Livingston said. But he was quick to say that, although slowed, the police training effort is making gains. "The effects we have achieved with the focus district development and training surge has been pretty astounding," he said. "But if we had the additional resources, we would achieve even greater results in a shorter amount of time. We would like to achieve them much faster."

[Islamists gain ground in Somalia](#)

IHT – 28 March 2008

The trouble started when government soldiers went to the market and, at gunpoint, began helping themselves to sacks of grain. Islamist insurgents poured into the streets to defend the merchants. The government troops got hammered, taking heavy casualties and retreating all the way back to the presidential palace, supposedly the most secure place in the city. It, too, came under fire. By its own admission, the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia is on life support. When it came here to the capital 15 months ago, backed by thousands of Ethiopian troops, it was widely hailed as the best chance in years to end Somalia's ceaseless cycles of war, chaos and suffering. But now its leaders say that unless they get more help - international peacekeepers, weapons, training and

money to pay their soldiers, among other things - this transitional government will fall, just like the 13 governments that came before it. Fewer than a third of the promised African Union soldiers have shown up, the United Nations has shied away from sending peacekeepers any time soon, and even the Ethiopians are taking a back seat, often leaving the government's defense to teenage Somali troops with clackety guns who are clearly overwhelmed. The Islamists have been gaining recruits, overrunning towns and getting increasingly bold. The new prime minister, credited as the government's best - and possibly last - hope, is reaching out to them, and some are receptive. But it is unclear whether he has the power within his own divided government to strike a peace deal before it is too late. The looming failure is making many people here and abroad question the strategy of installing the transitional government by force. In December 2006, Ethiopian troops, aided by American intelligence, ousted the Islamist administration that briefly controlled Mogadishu, bringing the transitional government to the city for the first time. The Bush administration said it was concerned about terrorists using Somalia as a sanctuary. The hunt for them has continued with a recent American cruise missile strike aimed at a terrorist suspect in southern Somalia, but it missed, wounded several civilians and promptly incited protests. Many Somalis and diplomats from other Western countries also question the State Department's decision this month to label a Somali resistance group a terrorist organization, something that many fear will only bolster its profile among the increasingly disillusioned populace. In recent weeks, the Islamists have routed warlords and militiamen who have been absorbed into the government forces and are undermining what little progress transitional leaders have made with their predatory tactics, like looting food. After 17 years of civil war, Somalia's violence seems to be driven not so much by clan hatred, ideology or religiosity but by something much simpler: survival. Nur Hassan Hussein, the prime minister, did not deny that government troops were robbing civilians. "This is the biggest problem we have," he said. But, he said, he does not have the money to pay them. Each month, more than half of government's revenue, mostly from port taxes, disappears - stolen by "our people," the prime minister said. That leaves Nur with about \$18 million a year in government money to run a failed state of nine million of some of the world's neediest, most collectively traumatized people. And "failed state" may be a generous term. In many ways, Somalia is not a state at all, but an ungoverned space between its neighbors and the sea. Sometimes it seems that if anything binds this country together, it is scar tissue.

[Taliban welcomes offer of talks](#)

al-Jazeera – 30 March 2008

Pakistan's Taliban movement has welcomed an offer by the country's prime minister to hold talks with them and has urged Islamabad to abandon the US-led "war on terror," a spokesman for the movement has said. Maulvi Omar said the announcement by the federal government to hold talks with the Tehrik-e-Taliban would improve law and order. There have been a growing number of suicide bombings in the past couple of months. Omar told reporters at a public rally in Bajaur tribal district: "The talks announcement by government will have extremely positive impact. The federal government should immediately stop the war for US interests." Yousuf Raza Gilani, Pakistan's prime minister, on Saturday urged the armed groups to renounce violence and offered to hold

talks with those who give up arms and join the new democratic era. "We are ready to talk to all those people who give up arms and are ready to embrace peace," Gilani said to loud support from politicians while addressing parliament. Omar said: "The government should immediately say goodbye to pro-US policies because there is no good in them for the government and the people of Pakistan." He also welcomed the repeal of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), a colonial era legal code for Pakistani tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, and said that Islamic law be enforced in its place. "The prime minister has won the hearts of the tribal people by ending the FCR, but the government should, keeping in view the wishes of tribal people, immediately announce enforcement of [an] Islamic system," he said. Kamal Hyder, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Islamabad, said the movement's demand was a "tricky issue". "For them [Taliban] to act in a state within a state is going to be difficult. But if the demand of the people where they are based is the imposition of Sharia, then the government could grant it," he said. Pakistan has been a bulwark in the US-led fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban since the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. The country has suffered an unprecedented wave of violence including suicide bombings in the past year blamed on al-Qaeda and a resurgent Taliban. Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani president and a key US ally, lost elections last month, and Gilani on Tuesday told George Bush, the US president, that a broader approach to the "war on terror" was necessary, including political solutions.

[Top Taleban leader 'is arrested'](#)

BBC – 1 April 2008

Afghan police say they have arrested top Taleban commander Mullah Naqibullah in the southern province of Helmand. Chief of police in Helmand Mohd Husain Andewal said the rebel leader was injured and arrested after insurgents attacked the police in Lashkar Gah. Three Taleban militants were killed and two officers were injured in the clash, he said. In February, the Afghan government claimed they had killed the rebel leader, but the Taleban denied this. A BBC reporter in Afghanistan later said he had spoken by telephone with someone he believed was Mullah Naqibullah. Mullah Naqibullah is a Pashtun rebel commander who has twice escaped from prison.

[Afghanistan, Pakistan open Khyber Border Coordination Center](#)

ISAF Public Affairs Office – 1 April 2008

Afghanistan, Pakistan and ISAF troops came together to mark the completion of the Khyber Border Coordination Center during a ceremony on the border of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan and Khyber province, Pakistan, Mar. 29. Located in historic and strategically important Khyber pass, the Khyber Border Coordination Center marks the first of six coordination centers planned for construction. "This center will give the opportunity to our officers on both sides to talk to each other every day about ... the activities of the enemy," said Afghan Defence Ministry operations chief Lieutenant General Sher Muhammad Karimi. "The War on Terror is a common interest of the entire world, more so for the two brother countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan." said the commander of the Pakistani 11th Corps, Lieutenant General Mosood. "Both these countries have suffered the maximum for the last eight years now. And, we brothers have

been actually victims of all types of terrorism for over 30 years now. "During the ceremony, three small trees were planted in a row by Major General David Rodriguez, commanding general for Regional Command East, and Generals Karimi and Mosood. They were planted to symbolize long-term partnership of Afghans, Pakistanis and international forces. "In time, these trees will grow, and their roots and branches will become intermingled and supportive of each other: This is the relationship we also seek to be strong together against the enemies who would deter our peoples from their desire for peace and stability," said General Rodriguez. All forces present acknowledged the need for unity and cooperation. "Unfortunately, this war cannot be fought alone, because the terror has no boundaries," said Gen. Mosood. "The terrorist has no morals, no ethnicity, no nationality and respects no laws. There has to be a united and cohesive effort of all participants on the War on Terror."

[General's advice to suspend troop cuts reflects bleak assessment of Iraq military](#)

IHT – 10 April 2008

The recommendation by the top American commander in Iraq to suspend troop reductions reflects a bleak assessment that Iraqi forces remain unprepared to take over the mission of securing their own nation, senior administration and military officials said Wednesday. In a second day of congressional testimony, the commander, General David Petraeus, left Democrats and some Republicans again frustrated as he steadfastly declined to spell out what more would have to happen on the ground before he would endorse withdrawals to take the number of American troops far below the 140,000 set to remain there after July. In almost 20 hours of testimony over two days, Petraeus and Ryan Crocker, the ambassador to Iraq, were much less specific than they were last September in assessing progress, prompting complaints that they presented no clear way for Congress or the American public to judge when or whether more troops might be on their way home. In contrast to the information presented in September, the charts that Petraeus offered in his testimony did not include any showing combat troops dipping below the 15 combat brigades to remain in Iraq when the troop build up ends in July. Since a significant number of support and aviation troops that accompanied the five extra brigades into Iraq will remain, nearly 140,000 American military personnel — more than the 132,000 before the buildup — will be in place well into the fall and probably through Election Day. In testimony on Wednesday, Crocker said his embassy was still preparing a report that would measure progress toward the 18 benchmarks that Congress set last year to help assess progress on the ground. As the testimony concluded late on Wednesday, President George W. Bush was preparing to lay out his plans for Iraq when he speaks from the Cross Hall of the White House on Thursday morning. Senior officials said the president would almost certainly endorse Petraeus's desire for sustained troop levels for at least 45 days after the final brigades from the troop increase leave. They said Petraeus's assessment that Iraqi forces remained unprepared to take over the security mission was shared by the White House and the Pentagon. But Bush is also expected to acknowledge the strain on the military by announcing that the current 15-month deployments to Iraq will be reduced to 12 months by August. The president is not expected to detail the

specific conditions on the ground in Iraq that would allow him to order large numbers of troops home before he leaves office.

[Afghans hold secret trials for men that U.S. detained](#)

IHT – 10 April 2008

Dozens of Afghan men who were previously held by the United States at Bagram Air Base and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, are now being tried here in secretive Afghan criminal proceedings based mainly on allegations forwarded by the American military. The prisoners are being convicted and sentenced to as much as 20 years' confinement in trials that typically run between half an hour and an hour, said human rights investigators who have observed them. One early trial was reported to have lasted barely 10 minutes, an investigator said. The prosecutions are based in part on a security law promulgated in 1987, during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Witnesses do not appear in court and cannot be cross-examined. There are no sworn statements of their testimony. Instead, the trials appear to be based almost entirely on terse summaries of allegations that are forwarded to the Afghan authorities by the United States military. Afghan security agents add what evidence they can, but the cases generally center on events that sometimes occurred years ago in war zones that the authorities may now be unable to reach. "These are no-witness paper trials that deny the defendants a fundamental fair-trial right to challenge the evidence and mount a defense," said Sahr Muhammed Ally, a lawyer for the advocacy group Human Rights First who has studied the proceedings. "So any convictions you get are fundamentally flawed." The head of Afghanistan's national intelligence agency, Amrullah Saleh, said his investigators did their best to develop their own evidence. But he added that the Afghan judicial system remained crippled by problems more than six years after the fall of the Taliban. "This is Afghanistan," he said. Referring to the Afghan trials, he added, "I am equally critical of that procedure, but who is supposed to fix it?" Since 2002 the Bush administration has pressed foreign governments to prosecute the Guantánamo prisoners from their countries as a condition of the men's repatriation. But many of those governments — including such close American allies as Britain — have objected, saying the American evidence would not hold up in their courts. Afghanistan represents perhaps the most notable exception. Although President Hamid Karzai refused to sign a decree law drafted with American help that would have allowed Afghanistan to hold the former detainees indefinitely as "enemy combatants," the Afghan authorities have now tried 82 of the former prisoners since last October and referred more than 120 other cases for prosecution. Of the prisoners who have been through the makeshift Afghan court, 65 have been convicted and 17 acquitted, according to a report on the prosecutions by Human Rights First that is to be made public on Thursday. A draft copy of the report was provided to The New York Times. United States officials defended their role in providing information for the Afghan trials as a legitimate way to try to contain the threats that some of the more dangerous detainees would pose if they were released outright. "These are not prosecutions that are being done at the request or behest of the United States government," said Sandra Hodgkinson, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for detention policy. "These are prosecutions that are being done by Afghans for crimes committed on their territory by their nationals." Hodgkinson said the United States had

pressed the Afghan authorities "to conduct the trials in a fair manner," and had insisted that lawyers be provided for the prisoners after the first 10 of them were convicted without legal representation. But she did not directly reject the criticisms raised in the Human Rights First report, adding, "These trials are much more consistent with the traditional Afghan justice process than they are with ours." The new court is located on the ground floor of a new high-security Afghan prison that was built by the United States at Pul-i-Charki, on the outskirts of Kabul. Although Afghan officials say the trials there are not officially secret, they have allowed only three outside observers — two human rights investigators and a representative of a local United Nations office. The human rights investigators were permitted to see two trials in February, review some trial documents and interview judges, prosecutors and defense lawyers for the court. General Safiullah Safi, the Afghan Army officer who runs the prison where the trials are being held, told a reporter that permission to view the trials could be granted only by Karzai's office. But that office referred the request to Abdul Jabar Sabit, the Afghan attorney general. Sabit's office finally said he was too busy to meet with a journalist.

TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Al-Qaeda grooming militants who 'look western': CIA](#)

AFP – 31 March 2008

CIA director Michael Hayden warned on Sunday that Al-Qaeda was training operatives who 'look western' and could enter the United States undetected to conduct terrorist attacks. General Hayden also said the terror network, which over the past 18 months has established a 'safe haven' in Pakistan's tribal areas along the Afghanistan border, has shed its operational reliance on mastermind Osama bin Laden. 'They are bringing operatives into that region for training - operatives that, a phrase I would use, wouldn't attract your attention if they were going through the customs line at Dulles (airport near Washington DC) with you,' General Hayden told NBC television. The new recruits 'look western' and 'would be able to come into this country ... without attracting the kind of attention that others might,' he said. General Hayden pointed to improved intelligence techniques in the federally administered tribal areas, due to 'good cooperation from a variety of allies' in Pakistan's tribal regions, for the information on the Al-Qaeda recruits. But much of the improvement was merely regaining ground that was lost through what General Hayden described as an 'absolutely disastrous' hands-off policy in the region by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in 2006 that led to Al-Qaeda's increased organisational ability there. 'He was, in fact, pulling forces and the writ of the Pakistani government back from the tribal region, and Al-Qaeda and the Taleban were having more and more free reign there.' In an annual threat assessment released in February, US intelligence reported it had detected an influx of new western recruits to Al-Qaeda safe havens in Pakistan's federally administered tribal areas since 2006. 'Al-Qaeda is improving the last key aspect of its ability to attack the US - the identification, training, and positioning of operatives for an attack in the Homeland,' the report said. In presenting the report to Congress, US intelligence chief Mike McConnell also said that plots uncovered in New Jersey and Illinois this year 'highlights the diverse threat posed by Homeland-based

radical Muslims inspired by extremist ideology.' General Hayden also stressed that while he was confident Al-Qaeda mastermind Osama bin Laden was still hiding out near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, the Saudi-born fighter no longer has operational control over the terror network. This now lies with Egyptian militants, he argued, although he said bin Laden remains an 'iconic figure,' and the Central Intelligence Agency is making 'every effort to kill or capture' him along with his Al-Qaeda lieutenants. 'Let me use (the term) iconic figure. His presence ... gives a certain punch, a certain image, to the global movement,' General Hayden said. 'But he's not operationally involved. An awful lot of the operational force of Al-Qaeda - the Arabic name is ... often finished by the country they are from - an awful lot of them are al-Masris, which means 'the Egyptians.'" Al-Qaeda's number two is Ayman Al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian militant who the US director of national intelligence Michael McConnell last September called 'the real intellectual leader of Al-Qaeda.' Bin Laden has claimed responsibility for the Sept 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, which killed nearly 3,000 people and prompted the US-led invasion of Afghanistan.

[Al-Qaeda deputy defends attacks](#)

BBC – 2 April 2008

Al-Qaeda deputy Ayman Zawahiri has defended attacks on the UN, describing the body as an enemy of Muslims. The Egyptian-born militant also used an internet message to say his leader, Osama Bin Laden, was in good health. His audio message answered questions about al-Qaeda's future solicited from websites linked to the group. The questions covered topics from the group's plans for Palestine and opportunities for women militants, al-Qaeda's al-Sahab media arm said. "The United Nations is an enemy of Islam and Muslims," said Zawahiri in the 90-minute message. He denied reports alleging Bin Laden was sick. "Sheikh Osama Bin Laden is in good health," he said. "The ill-intentioned always try to circulate false reports about him being sick." Zawahiri also called for attacks on Jews both inside and outside Israel. "We promise our Muslim brothers that we will do our utmost to strike Jewish people in Israel and abroad with help and guidance from God," he said. The recording followed an audio message released last month attributed to Zawahiri, urging attacks on American and Israeli interests. Some 900 questions from al-Qaeda supporters and those curious about the group had been submitted since al-Sahab solicited requests for information last December. Both Bin Laden and Zawahiri are believed to be hiding in Afghanistan or Pakistan.

[Al Qaeda No. 2: We don't kill innocents](#)

CNN – 3 April 2008

The second-in-command of al Qaeda has said the terrorist group does not kill innocents and that its leader Osama bin Laden is healthy, according to a transcript of an audio tape released by radical Islamist Web sites. Ayman al-Zawahiri made his remarks in response to questions solicited on a Web site close to al Qaeda. The questions asked his views about Egypt and Iraq as well as Hamas, the militant Islamic group that seized control of Gaza last year. They also referred to attacks by al Qaeda and affiliated groups that have killed scores of civilians in Muslim nations, such as Algeria, Iraq and Morocco. Al-

Zawahiri, who led an Egyptian Islamic militant group that joined forces with bin Laden in the 1990s, said innocents who have been killed in attacks by al Qaeda or affiliated groups died as a result of "unintentional error" or because they were used as "human shields" by "the enemy." Governments worldwide have blamed al Qaeda for attacks that have killed several thousand people, including about 3,000 who died in the attacks on Washington and New York on September 11, 2001. Al-Zawahiri defended a December attack in Algeria -- hospital sources said it killed 60 people -- because one of its targets was a United Nations building and the "United Nations is an enemy of Islam and Muslims," according to the transcript. He said "bin Laden is healthy and well," the transcript said, but that even if he "doesn't become ill, he must die one day." Al-Jazeera broadcast an audiotope last month on which a voice identified as bin Laden's declared "Iraq is the perfect base to set up the jihad to liberate Palestine." Bin Laden, who was behind the terrorist network's September 11 attacks, has been in hiding since the U.S. assault on Afghanistan that followed those strikes. He is rumored to have faced health troubles or to have been wounded in an attack, although nothing conclusive has been found. He is believed to be hiding somewhere in the mountainous region of the Pakistani-Afghan border. The United States has posted a \$25 million reward for his capture.

[Britain says 8 men planned to bring down airliners with bombs](#)

AP – 4 April 2008

Eight British men planned to detonate homemade bombs aboard at least seven airliners bound for the United States and Canada, hoping to kill hundreds in a mammoth terror attack, prosecutors said as the their trial opened. Prosecutor Peter Wright was outlining more details on Friday as he explained details of the plan to launch coordinated strikes on United Airlines, American Airlines and Air Canada flights in 2006. Seven specific flights from London's Heathrow airport to Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Toronto and Montreal had been singled out for attack and data on the routes stored on a computer memory stick, Mr Wright said. He said the seven targeted flights would have all departed from London within a window of three hours and would have been in mid-air simultaneously. Each would have held between 240 and 285 people, meaning around 1,500 people could have been killed if the attacks had been carried out as planned. But the group expressed hopes of recruiting as many as 18 suicide bombers, Mr Wright said. Plotters hoped to smuggle hydrogen peroxide-based explosives on board, disguised as soft drinks or mouthwash. The improvised bombs would then be assembled and detonated in mid-flight, he said. 'They are men with the cold-eyed certainty of the fanatic,' said Mr Wright, telling the jury the men are Muslim extremists. 'The plan was designed to bring about what would have been a civilian death toll on an almost unprecedented scale.' Airlines imposed tough new limits on the amount of liquids and gels passengers can carry on to flights as a result of the alleged plot. After rounding up the men in Aug 2006, police found a computer data stick which stored data on the seven airliner services from London. Also logged were details of flights to Boston, Denver and Miami. 'These men were almost ready to put the plot into practice,' said Mr Wright. Major disruption was caused to British airports and hundreds of flights were grounded when police arrested the suspects in August 2006. All eight men, each of whom has ties to Pakistan, are accused of conspiracy to murder and a charge of planning an act of

violence likely to endanger the safety of an aircraft. Both charges carry maximum sentences of life imprisonment. The men are: Abdulla Ahmed Ali, 27; Assad Sarwar, 27; Tanvir Hussain, 27; Mohammed Gulzar, 26; Ibrahim Savant, 27; Arafat Waheed Khan, 26; Waheed Zaman, 23 and Umar Islam, 29.

[Pirates seize French yacht](#)

CNN – 4 April 2008

Pirates seized control of a French luxury yacht carrying 30 crew members Friday in the Gulf of Aden off Somalia's coast, the French government and the ship's owner said. Attackers stormed the three-mast *Le Ponant* as it returned without passengers from the Seychelles, in the Indian Ocean, toward the Mediterranean Sea, said officials with French maritime transport company CMA-CGM. "This is a blatant act of piracy," Prime Minister Francois Fillon told reporters while on a visit to Brussels. "The Defense and Foreign ministries are mobilized to act as quickly as possible, I hope in the coming minutes or hours to try to win the freedom of these hostages." He did not elaborate. France has considerable military resources in the region, including a base in Djibouti and a naval flotilla circulating in the Indian Ocean. The ship was in the high seas in the Gulf of Aden, off Somalia's coast in the Indian Ocean, the ministry said. At least some of the crew members are French. The company declined to identify any other crew member nationalities. "French authorities are handling the situation," Jean-Emmanuel Sauvee, managing director of La Compagnie des Iles du Ponant, told reporters in the southeastern city of Marseille, where his subsidiary of CMA-CGM is based. The company did not want to comment further so as not to endanger the crew members held hostage, he said. According to the company's Web site, the 88-meter (288-foot) boat features four decks, two restaurants, and indoor and outdoor luxury lounges. It can hold up to 64 passengers. *Le Ponant* was next scheduled to carry passengers as part of a 10-day, seven-night trip from Alexandria, Egypt, to Valletta, Malta, starting April 19. Prices started at \$3,465, not including air fare or taxes. Pirates seized more than two dozen ships off Somalia's coast last year. Denmark's government paid a ransom to win the release in August of the crew of a Danish cargo ship that was hijacked by Somali pirates some two months after they were taken captive. The U.S. Navy has led international patrols to try to combat piracy in the region. Last year, the guided missile destroyer *USS Porter* opened fire to destroy pirate skiffs tied to a Japanese tanker. Wracked by more than a decade of violence and anarchy, Somalia does not have its own navy, and a transitional government formed in 2004 with U.N. help has struggled to assert control. The International Maritime Bureau, which tracks piracy, said in its annual report earlier this year that global pirate attacks rose 10 percent in 2007, marking the first increase in three years.

[8 civilians killed, 22 wounded in suicide attack in southern Afghanistan](#)

AP – 10 April 2008

A suicide car bomber targeting a NATO convoy killed eight civilians and wounded 22 others Thursday in southern Afghanistan, an official said. The car bomber blew himself up shortly after a NATO convoy passed near him in Kandahar city, said provincial police chief Sayed Agha Saqib. No NATO troops were wounded in the blast, he said. Eight

civilians were killed in the powerful explosion, which also damaged several shops, Saquib said. The 22 wounded included two policemen and seven people who were in serious condition, Saquib said. Taliban militants regularly launch suicide bombings against Afghan and foreign troops in the country but most of the victims in such attacks have been civilians. The number of suicide attacks spiked in 2007, with the Taliban launching more than 140 suicide missions — the highest number since they were ousted from power by the United States-led invasion of 2001. More than 8,000 people were killed in insurgency related violence in 2007, according to the United Nations.

[China 'uncovered Olympic terror plot'](#)

CNN – 10 April 2008

China says it has uncovered a criminal ring planning to kidnap athletes and others at the Beijing Olympic Games. Ministry of Public Security Spokesman Wu Heping told a news conference Thursday that the ring based in the restive western Xinjiang region was one of two that had been broken up. The other was previously reported. Wu said 35 people were arrested in the latest case between March 26 and April 6 for plotting to kidnap athletes, foreign journalists and other visitors during the August Olympics. Wu said "this violent terrorist gang hoped to sabotage the Beijing Olympics by creating an international impact."

DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

[Saudi Arabia slams Syria over Lebanon crisis](#)

CNN – 29 March 2008

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister slammed Syria for obstructing Lebanese peace efforts and called on the Arab League Saturday to punish member states that don't honor the group's consensus decisions. In a press conference broadcast live on some Arab TVs during the Arab League summit's opening session in Damascus, Prince Faisal said from Riyadh that "the kingdom has never boycotted a summit before." He blamed his boycott on Syria, and implicitly blasted the country for worsening most of the crisis in the Middle East, especially in Lebanon. "Syria is a country that is crucial to joint Arab efforts," Faisal said. He blamed Damascus for not abiding by an Arab consensus over how to solve the lingering presidential crisis in Lebanon. "The problem is that what had been agreed by consensus in the Arab League, including by Syria, wasn't implemented in reality," he said. Faisal called for the Arab League to punish member states that breach a common resolution. "The absence of credibility and seriousness in implementing (agreements) should be confronted... call it punishment or countermeasures," he said. The Saudi prince, whose country is a top-U.S. ally and the regional heavyweight, said the Arab League was losing its credibility when "a given plan isn't implemented because one or two countries have not taken it into effect." "There must be a deterrent action or things will not go well," he insisted. In another clear allusion to Syrian meddling in the Mideast, he warned Damascus against hindering Palestinian-Israeli peace efforts and further worsening the situation in Iraq. "Attempts to hinder the (Arab) initiative in Lebanon are