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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

### Pakistan's cultural capital loses kite festival to violence

AP – 13 April 2008

Pakistan's political turmoil and violence have claimed a high-profile cultural victim - a centuries-old kite-flying festival that draws thousands of visitors. The Basant festival brings a springtime buzz to eastern Pakistan and its regional capital, Lahore. Officials usually relax a ban on the pastime - imposed to prevent abandoned strings that are often covered with crushed glass from slitting people's throats. But the festival has been canceled this year amid tensions spawned by terrorist attacks and the country's rocky return to democracy after years of military rule. Sohail Janjua, a city government spokesman, said the festival was first postponed due to national mourning for assassinated ex-leader Benazir Bhutto, then because of Feb. 18 parliamentary elections. Lahore has suffered three suicide attacks since, including two that killed 27 people on March 11, resulting in increased concerns about security. 'How can we ignore the deaths of innocent people to celebrate anything?' Janjua said. In the past, the city's youth have sent thousands of brightly colored kites into the sky during the festival, held on a weekend in February or March. Basant means yellow in Hindi, a reference to the mustard flowers that blossom in the region in early spring. Crowds of Lahoris typically clamber onto rooftops to watch. Well-heeled guests from around the country and beyond pack city hotels for a few days of late-night festivities. The celebration has been threatened before by authorities concerned about public safety and religious conservatives who oppose the festival because it is a reminder of Pakistan's pre-Islamic past and encourages drinking and dancing. Dedicated kite flyers often engage in duels and use strings made of wire or coated with crushed glass in an attempt to cut down a rival, often after placing bets on the outcome. Authorities tried to ban kite-flying in 2006 after a string of people were killed by sharpened strings, falls from rooftops or celebratory gunfire. Last year, authorities allowed only smaller kites with normal strings, but at least 10 people still were fatally slashed. Police detained hundreds in a failed attempt to impose the restrictions. Irfan Chaudhry, a 24-year-old who hurt an arm in a tumble from a roof while flying a kite last year, said he was sorry the festival was canceled. 'It is a positive activity, and we should be given a chance to relax and entertain ourselves,' he said. Some say he will not get that chance partly because of a particular patron - President Pervez Musharraf - who is more than a little distracted. 'Every year the ban on kite flying is lifted only after the intervention of Mr Musharraf, who himself would come to Lahore to celebrate the event,' said Mr Maher Saleem Mithu, whose shops selling kites at several points in the city face a bleak season. 'This year, Musharraf is surrounded by various crises. So, no Basant without Musharraf,' Mr Mithu said. Presidential spokesman Rashid Qureshi said Mr Musharraf in the past responded to invitations, for instance from the provincial governor, to attend the festival and was temperamentally suited to appreciate it. 'He's quite an open-minded guy, not a narrow-minded stickler, so I wouldn't imagine him saying 'Oh, if the law says no kite-flying we can't have it (the festival),' Mr Qureshi said. But he demurred when asked if the president had used his influence to let the kites fly. Liaquat Baloch, a leader of Pakistan's biggest Islamist party, accused Mr Musharraf of using the festival to

boost his secular credentials in the West. 'Now his own kite string has been cut, so how can he think of any celebrations?'

### Gang violence threatens fragile peace in Kenya

AP – 14 April 2008

A notorious criminal gang clashed Monday with the riot police, erected blazing roadblocks and vowed to take its fight nationwide in an unsettling reminder of the fragility of Kenya's peace. The violence started before dawn and at least four people were killed as members of the outlawed Mungiki gang protested the death of their imprisoned leader's wife, who was found beheaded last week, the authorities said. "This is lawlessness and sheer madness," said Joseph Kanyiri, a district commissioner in Nairobi. He said the fighting was gang-related, and not connected to the Dec. 27 election in Kenya that unleashed weeks of bloodshed and tarnished the country's reputation for stability. But the bloodshed, if it continues, poses a challenge to the new power-sharing government, which was formed under international pressure after more than 1,000 people were killed following the disputed presidential election. On Monday, gangsters were exchanging gunfire with the police just steps from makeshift camps where some of the 300,000 displaced people in Kenya are still living. In the Dandora shantytown - infamous for a sprawling, environmentally disastrous waste dump - Dorian Opio, 13, peeked out from the gates of her school as the riot police fired live rounds and tear gas down alleyways. A flaming police station next door sent black smoke billowing into the air. "I don't know if I should walk home," Opio said. "I think maybe I should go. All the other students left but I don't know how I'll get there." Members of the Mungiki, an outlawed sect linked to a string of beheadings, held protests in several cities throughout the country - including the Nairobi slums and the western town of Naivasha, which were scenes of some of the worst postelection violence in January and February. The protesters demanded the release of their imprisoned leader, Maina Njenga, and accused the police of being behind the death of Njenga's wife and the gang's acting leader last week. "We will not stop demonstrating," said Joe Waiganjo of the Kenya National Youth Alliance, the political wing of the Mungiki. He said the group was planning protests throughout the country in coming days. A spokesman for the national police, Eric Kiraithe, denied police involvement in the killings. "That is totally false accusations," he said. "Why do the police want to kill this woman? If we are interested in the wife of the criminal, we would have taken her to court." The Mungiki emerged in the 1990s, inspired by the Mau Mau rebellion against colonial rule. The group is believed to have thousands of adherents, all drawn from the Kikuyu, the largest tribe in the country. In recent years, the Mungiki - which means "multitude" in the Kikuyu language - has been linked to extortion, murder and political violence. Two people were shot and killed in the Central Province, according to the regional police chief, Philip Ndwiga. Gang members who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisals said two others had been killed in Dandora, a hotbed of Mungiki activity. The police and gang members fought running battles in the center of Naivasha, about 100 kilometers, or 60 miles, northwest of the capital. In the western town of Eldoret, a senior police officer, Muinde Kioko, said two Mungiki supporters had been badly beaten by members of the public. Several burned-out, smoldering cars were blocking roads, and about a dozen police officers with shields were patrolling a main

traffic circle near Mathare, a major shantytown near Nairobi. The roads were littered with broken glass and the blackened shells of minibuses and cars. "We are not safe," said Joyce Nyambura, 24, who works at a photo studio in the Nairobi city center but chose not to brave the gunfire to go to work. "We don't know where these Mungiki are but they seem to be scattered everywhere."

### [Somalia to Ask UN for International Peacekeepers](#)

VOA – 15 April 2008

Ali Ahmed Jama told reporters at the United Nations Tuesday that his government will use this week's two-day meeting at U.N. headquarters of African leaders and Security Council member states to press for an international force to take over security in Somalia. "We hope the Security Council would take meaningful steps to assume its responsibility and engage and replace the African Union force there with a U.N. force," he said. "This is the proposal we are going to make to the U.N. Security Council." The current African Union force, known as AMISOM, is made up of about 2,300 troops from Uganda and Burundi. Jama said his government is asking the United Nations to fill the security vacuum which is now being filled by a combination of Somali security forces, AMISOM and some troops from neighboring Ethiopia. The foreign minister said his government believes it can find strong international support for U.N. engagement in Somalia. But some members of the international community and the U.N. secretariat have expressed concerns about a possible peacekeeping force being deployed to Somalia, saying there is no peace to keep. In a report to the Security Council last month, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined four scenarios for possible future developments in Somalia. They ranged from increasing U.N. personnel in parts of Somalia to the possible deployment of more than 28,000 U.N. peacekeepers - but only if certain political and security conditions were met on the ground. African leaders and U.N. Security Council members will be holding high-level discussions this week on increasing security cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

### [Day of Gaza unrest leaves 22 dead](#)

BBC – 16 April 2008

A Hamas ambush in northern Gaza killed three Israeli troops, Israel's highest daily loss in the area for 3 years. That sparked Israeli air strikes near Bureij refugee camp, which Israel said targeted gunmen, but which left five children among 11 people killed. A cameraman also died when his car was apparently fired on by an Israeli tank. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he was gravely concerned by the escalation of fighting and urged both sides to show restraint. At least 100 people were killed during operations launched by Israel in early March after Palestinian rocket attacks on its territory. Since then, casualty figures had dwindled in Gaza with Egypt attempting to broker some sort of ceasefire, the BBC's Tim Franks reports. Now the chances of that appear slimmer than ever, our Middle East correspondent says. Wednesday's highest death-toll came when Israel launched air-strikes near the Bureij camp. According to Hamas, Israeli helicopters launched four missiles. Earlier, three Israeli soldiers were killed and three wounded when Hamas gunmen approached the security fence near the

Nahal Oz crossing, Israel's army said. The deaths were Israel's highest daily toll in the area since 2006. Pursuing two Hamas fighters who had planted a bomb, the soldiers were ambushed by a second Hamas group lying in wait, Israel's military said. Hamas said it had mounted a "sophisticated ambush".

### [Bomb kills Dutch commander's son](#)

*BBC* – 18 April 2008

The son of the new Dutch armed forces commander has been killed by a roadside bomb in southern Afghanistan. The blast, early on Friday in Uruzgan province, also killed another Dutch soldier and wounded two more. Lt Dennis van Uhm, 23, was the son of Gen Peter van Uhm, who took up overall command of Dutch forces on Thursday. A total of 16 Dutch troops have now died in Afghanistan. Friday's attack is not thought to have specifically targeted the new military commander.

### [27 reported killed in Somalia capital](#)

*CNN* – 19 April 2008

At least 27 people, including nine Ethiopian soldiers and seven Islamic militants, were killed Saturday in fierce fighting in the Somalian capital of Mogadishu, according to eyewitnesses and hospital officials. The fighting began Saturday morning with heavy gunfire and a barrage of artillery that wreaked havoc in neighborhoods even a few kilometers away. "Ethiopian soldiers walking in numbers have spread into our neighborhood of Towfiq this morning, and that has sparked deadly clashes between them and the insurgents," resident Muna Abdi Ibrahim said from Mogadishu. He said it appeared that the militants had ambushed the soldiers, who entered the area on foot. "The Ethiopians came to the village very quietly ... no resistance at all, but suddenly the sound of gunfire erupted, sending [us] beneath our beds for fear," he said. Ethiopia's army invaded Somalia in December 2006 and deposed an Islamic government. Ethiopian troops have remained to support a transitional secular government as it battles Islamic insurgents. Abdi Rahim Isa Adow, a spokesman for the Islamic insurgents, confirmed that seven militants had been killed but said that "a large number of Ethiopian soldiers" had also been killed. Among the dead were 11 civilians, five of whom were killed at a tea bar in the northern part of the city by an artillery strike. At least eight civilians were admitted to Mogadishu's Madina Hospital, spokesman Dahir Dhere said. Of those, two died of their wounds. Abdulle Muse, 52, who keeps grazing land near Barakat cemetery in northeast Mogadishu, site of another Saturday clash, said he saw at least six dead Ethiopian soldiers taken away by their comrades. A woman in another neighborhood said she saw the bodies of three Ethiopian soldiers surrounded by jubilant militants. The fighting prompted city officials to close public transportation at an industrial road running through three neighborhoods where the clashes took place.

[U.S. commanders seeking to widen Pakistan attacks](#)

*IHT* – 20 April 2008

American commanders in Afghanistan have in recent months urged a widening of the war that could include American attacks on indigenous Pakistani militants in the tribal areas inside Pakistan, according to United States officials. The requests have been rebuffed for now, the officials said, after deliberations in Washington among senior Bush administration officials who fear that attacking Pakistani radicals may anger Pakistan's new government, which is negotiating with the militants, and destabilize an already fragile security situation. American commanders would prefer that Pakistani forces attack the militants, but Pakistani military operations in the tribal areas have slowed recently to avoid upsetting the negotiations. Pakistan's government has given the Central Intelligence Agency limited authority to kill Arab and other foreign operatives in the tribal areas, using remotely piloted Predator aircraft. But administration officials say the Pakistani government has put far greater restrictions on American operations against indigenous Pakistani militant groups, including one thought to have been behind the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. American intelligence officials say that the threat emanating from Pakistan's tribal areas is growing, and that Pakistani networks there have taken on an increasingly important role as an ally of Al Qaeda in plotting attacks against American and other allied troops in Afghanistan, and in helping foreign operatives plan attacks on targets in the West. The officials said the American military's proposals included options for limited cross-border artillery strikes into Pakistan, missile attacks by Predator aircraft or raids by small teams of CIA paramilitary forces or Special Operations forces.

[Report: Mogadishu battles leave 81 dead](#)

*CNN* – 20 April 2008

Two days of fighting between government and Ethiopian troops and Islamic militants in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, left 81 civilians dead and more than 100 wounded, a local human rights group reported Sunday. Sudan Ali Ahmed, the head of the Mogadishu-based Elman Human Rights Group, accused the rebels of using civilians as human shields, while the transitional government's Ethiopian allies shelled residential neighborhoods with tanks and artillery. "We are condemning the warring sides in the strongest terms for violating human rights and committing war crimes against civilians," Ahmed said. Large numbers of civilians have been fleeing two neighborhoods in the northeastern part of the capital where the fighting has been taking place, witnesses reported, joining a population of displaced Somalis that aid groups estimate already tops 1 million. A witness told CNN that Ethiopian troops seized a mosque in one of the neighborhoods where the worst fighting was taking place. The Ethiopians left the bodies of six elderly men outside the mosque around noon Sunday and were separating men and boys from the neighborhoods and arresting them, the witness said. "The Ethiopians are firing heavy weaponry into areas where civilians are heavily populated, while the Islamic militants are firing mortars and RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] from within those areas," Ahmed said. "So the exchange is causing a civilian casualty toll which is unspeakable." Others, like Mohamed Ismail Ali, a father of eight in the capital's Suqa

Holaha neighborhood, reported being trapped by the fighting. Ali said he could see three bodies through his window. "This morning, we have had a plan to flee from our house after yesterday's clashes," he told CNN. "But it became totally impossible to go outside the house, because artillery is falling everywhere, let alone the straying bullets which are flying any minute." Residents at Darimoole, a village on the road linking northeastern Mogadishu to the neighboring town of Bal'ad, told CNN that a new exodus of people has begun. "The people are fleeing in a large number as earlier 2007, when first rounds of fighting between the Ethiopians and the Islamic militants happened in the capital," said Omar Hagi Ali, an elder at Dirimole. Somali Prime Minister Nur Hassan Nur Ade had no immediate comment on the latest fighting, the latest in a lengthy insurgency against his government and its Ethiopian backers. Ethiopia invaded Somalia in December 2006 to install the U.N.-backed transitional government in Mogadishu after a decade and a half of near-anarchy. Ethiopian troops quickly routed the provisional government set up by the Islamic Courts Union, which had wrested control of the capital from Somali warlords six months earlier. The Islamists responded by launching a guerrilla war that destroyed Ethiopia's plans for a quick withdrawal. A year after the invasion, Ethiopia's government appealed for international contributions to a peacekeeping mission that was supposed to replace its forces, but the African Union-led mission has drawn few takers. The invasion had the blessing of the United States, which accused the ICU of harboring suspected al Qaeda operatives -- including men believed to have planned the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The ICU denied the allegation, but the insurgency its fighters launched against Ethiopian troops won the praise of al Qaeda's fugitive leaders.

### [Georgia says Russian jet shot down its drone](#)

*Reuters* – 21 April 2008

A Georgian unmanned reconnaissance plane downed at the weekend was shot down by a Russian air force jet, Georgia's air force said on Monday, citing video footage of the incident. "On April 20 a Russian Mig-29 fighter jet shot down an unarmed, unmanned air vehicle which was performing basic reconnaissance over Georgian territory," Colonel David Nairashvili, commander of Georgia's air force, told Reuters. "It's absolutely illegal for a Russian Mig-29 to be there," he said. A spokesman for Russia's air force, when asked about the Georgian allegation, said: "Nonsense. What would a Russian jet fighter be doing over Georgian territory?" The drone was brought down near Abkhazia, a Georgian region which broke away from Tbilisi's rule in a 1990s war and is controlled by Moscow-backed separatists, Nairashvili said. Abkhazia's separatist administration said on Sunday its forces had shot down the drone. Tbilisi's pro-Western government last week accused Moscow of a de facto annexation of Abkhazia after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his government to establish closer ties with the region. Georgia's air force supplied to Reuters video footage which it said was recorded and transmitted by the drone's on-board camera before it was shot down. The pictures show a jet aircraft firing a missile in the direction of a drone. A few seconds later the screen goes blank. No identification markings are visible on the aircraft that fired the missile. Nairashvili said the aircraft type meant it could only be a Russian air force jet. "The Mig-29 has a distinctive twin-tail marking. It's a Russian aircraft. Georgia does not possess it, nor do

Abkhaz separatists," he said. Radar records showed the aircraft took off from a base in Abkhazia and crossed into Russia after the attack, Nairashvili said.

[U.N.: 100,000 more dead in Darfur than reported](#)

*CNN* – 22 April 2008

The number of deaths in Sudan's Darfur region since 2006 may have been underestimated by as much as 50 percent, the U.N. undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs said Tuesday. In March, international figures, including U.N. data, put the death toll in Darfur at 200,000, with another 2.5 million people displaced. But 300,000 are believed to have died in the tribal conflict in the past two years, said John Holmes, who also is the United Nations emergency relief coordinator. Holmes said that sexual violence has increased and that food allotments for civilians affected by the civil war will be halved in a few days. Holmes gave the U.N. Security Council an update on conditions in the western Sudan region, revisiting a report he gave a year ago. "I am sad to say that the humanitarian situation remains as grim today as it was then, if not more so," he said. In 2008, 100,000 civilians have fled their homes, many not for the first time. The Darfur conflict began five years ago, when ethnic African tribesmen took up arms, complaining of decades of neglect and discrimination by the Sudanese government. Sudan's Arab-dominated government is accused of responding by unleashing tribal militias known as Janjaweed, which are said to have committed the worst atrocities against Darfur's local communities. There also have been intra-rebel and tribal clashes, Holmes added. He blamed the military arm of the Justice and Equality Movement faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement for the most recent round of violence, and he accused the government of using "disproportionate force" and failing to differentiate between civilians and rebels in their response. "Darfur today is still characterized by insecurity, lawlessness and impunity," he said. "A particularly worrying feature is evidence of high levels of sexual violence and exploitation in the northern corridor of west Darfur over the past two months." This is shown by the increased number of women and girls seeking treatment after sexual brutality, Holmes said. The World Food Programme announced last week that it will have to cut back its food distributions in May, partly because of attacks on convoys that reduced the amount of supplies they can get through, Holmes said. Six aid workers have been killed this year, and 42 humanitarian posts have been attacked. The supply line also is hurt by soaring food prices: The price of staples such as millet has doubled since April 2007, Holmes said. While expressing gratitude to the Sudanese government for improved cooperation under various agreements, Holmes said there still is no physical access to internally displaced persons and some other groups. He said he was "saddened and angry" that after five years, there has been no lasting solution to the suffering. He made several recommendations to the government, including disbanding the Janjaweed, providing security for citizens, ending impunity for criminals and shouldering more of the financial burden for humanitarian aid. Holmes also said rebels must stop their attacks against people and humanitarian convoys.

## **TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM**

### [Deadly blast tears through mosque in Iran](#)

*CNN* – 12 April 2008

A hand-made bomb exploded after evening prayers Saturday at a mosque in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz, leaving nine people dead and 105 wounded, Iran's state-run television reported. However, the official Islamic Republic News Agency offered a conflicting report about the explosion. It quoted the governor general of Shiraz as saying, "Initial surveys about the cause of the blast have proved there has been no bomb involved in the incident and, therefore, there (are) other probable causes." The blast and subsequent fire happened about 6 p.m. in the men's section of the mosque while a cleric was addressing the worshippers, according to the Fars news agency. The sermon denounced Bahai and Wahabi faiths, both of which are considered heresies by some Shiites. No one claimed immediate responsibility for the blast. The explosion blew out windows in several nearby houses. Buildings shook more than half a mile away, The Associated Press reported, citing local media accounts. There were appeals for blood donations, according to the AP. Bombings are unusual in Iran, though the predominantly Shiite Muslim country has endured sporadic attacks in recent years. The last major bombing occurred in February 2007, when a car bomb blew up near a bus carrying members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Corps, leaving a dozen dead and injuring dozens more in the southeastern part of the country. Shiraz, a city of more than 1 million people in central Iran, is well known for being home to many scholars, artists and poets and for its local craftsmanship of rugs and metalwork. It is about 400 miles south of Iran's capital, Tehran.

### [Authorities: Sabotage possible in Iran mosque blast](#)

*CNN* – 13 April 2008

An explosion in a southern Iranian mosque killed 12 people and wounded more than 200 after evening prayers Saturday night, Iran's Fars news agency reported. While an initial report said a homemade bomb exploded, a local police commander said it appeared to be a case of negligent handling of live munitions inside the mosque. The local prosecutor and an Iranian foreign ministry spokesman suggested the possibility of sabotage had not been ruled out. The blast and fire occurred about 9 p.m. Saturday in the Rahpouyan-e Vessal cultural center section of Shohada Hosseiniyeh mosque in the city of Shiraz, Iran's state-run news agency reported. Survivors were being treated at 12 hospitals, the agency reported. Iran's Fars news agency estimated 800 people, mostly young, were gathered at the mosque Saturday to hear a prominent local cleric's sermon denouncing Baha'i and Wahhabi faiths -- both of which are considered heretical by some Shiites. Fars' initial reports said a homemade bomb was to blame, but provincial police Commander Ali Moaeyri later said it "was not sabotage." "Some live munitions may have been left behind at that location, which could have been the cause of the explosion," Moaeyri said. The police commander said the munitions were apparently left behind after a "Sacred Defense" exhibition was held at the mosque, which also serves as a cultural center. "Sacred Defense" is a local reference to the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. Local militia

groups -- known as Basij -- often use the mosques for meeting places. The police commander's explanation, however, is apparently not the final word. Shiraz prosecutor Hojatoleslam Jaber Baneshi told Iran's official news agency, the IRNA, that a committee was investigating the cause. He did not rule out sabotage. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini also said the cause was uncertain. "We cannot make any prejudgments regarding the bomb blasts, and no group has claimed responsibility," he said. Bombings are unusual in Iran, though the predominantly Shiite country has endured sporadic attacks in recent years. Shiraz -- a historical city of more than 1 million people -- is known for being home to many scholars, artists and poets, and for local craftsmanship of rugs and metalwork. The tourist city, about 400 miles south of Tehran, is the capital of southern province of Fars.

### [Indonesia arrests two JI members](#)

AAP – 14 April 2008

Indonesia has arrested two more members of Islamic militant group Jemaah Islamiah (JI), a senior police official told Reuters, which could lead to the arrest of other key militants wanted for attacks in Southeast Asia. In particular, the police official said the arrests could help lead to the capture of Noordin Mohammad Top, one of the most senior members of Jemaah Islamiah who is still on the run. The two men - Abdul Rohim, who also uses the name Abu Husna, and a man identified only as Agus - were caught in Malaysia more than two weeks ago and have been transferred to a detention centre in Jakarta, according to the police official in Jakarta, who declined to be identified by name. Abu Husna "is a member of the markaziah, the central board of the organisation," the police official said, while the man identified as Agus was involved in attacks in Sulawesi and Java, and has close links to Abu Dujana, the military commander of Jemaah Islamiah, he added. Sidney Jones, an expert on the Jemaah Islamiah at Brussels-based think-tank, the International Crisis Group, said Abu Husna is believed to have replaced Zarkasih as the head of JI, after Zarkasih was arrested last year in Indonesia. "Abu Husna is a central figure in the organisation and he would know everything about the current activities, command structure and so on," said Jones, who is based in Jakarta. Abu Husna has previously been the JI central command's head of education, overseeing some two dozen or so JI schools across Indonesia, according to Jones. The other man who was arrested could be Agus Purwanto, Jones said, adding that he had studied at the famous Islamic boarding school run by the controversial cleric, Abu Bakar Bashir, in Solo, central Java. Bashir was jailed for 30 months for conspiracy over the Bali bombings but was later cleared. Following the arrest of some JI members in Java, Agus fled to Poso, in Central Sulawesi. According to some reports, he became a local JI leader in Poso, reporting to Abu Dujana and to Zarkasih. Further details may be released in the next day or two, another police official told Reuters. Jemaah Islamiah, which wants to create an Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia, was responsible for a series of attacks in the region including the 2002 bomb attacks in Bali in which over 200 Indonesians and foreigners were killed.

[Nine Casablanca bombers escaped via toilet tunnel](#)

*AFP* – 16 April 2008

Nine Islamists on the run for more than a week after escaping their Moroccan jail built a 22m-long tunnel from a cell's toilet, the country's justice minister said on Tuesday. Interpol has launched a worldwide security alert to capture the men, who were convicted of the 2003 Casablanca bombings which killed 45. 'Starting from a cell toilet, they hollowed out a tunnel 60cm in diameter, 22m long and 2m underground,' Mr Abdelouahed Radi told the Moroccan Senate. 'There was negligence,' he admitted - he revealed that on the eve of the jail break, the prisoners had obtained permission from a guard to be housed in two adjoining cells. The minister did not reveal how long it took to build the tunnel, nor the methods used, nor where it came out. According to reports from some local residents, the end of the tunnel emerged into the garden of the director of the prison, at Kenitra, north of Rabat. The Islamist prisoners - one of whom was facing a death sentence - escaped at dawn on April 7, leaving a note exonerating the prison guards and other prisoners. Mr Radi told the Senate there was also a problem of prison overcrowding and a serious lack of guards. 'There are currently 56,000 inmates, of whom one third are drug traffickers. There are only 5,500 guards,' he said. Mr Radi added that there was an urgent need to build more prisons, and to use preventive detention less often. Interpol has now published the names and pictures of the escapees on its website, issuing a 'Orange Notice' alert worldwide to catch them. As well as the bomber sentenced to death, six others had been given life imprisonment and two were given 20 years in jail for their role in the blasts. The Casablanca bombing death toll of 45 includes 12 suicide bombers.

[Al Qaeda still in Pakistan tribal areas, report says](#)

*CNN* – 17 April 2008

Al Qaeda is still operating within Pakistan's mountainous tribal region bordering Afghanistan, and the United States lacks a "comprehensive" plan for meeting its national security goals there, said a U.S. government study released Thursday. Despite the United States providing \$10.5 billion in military and economic aid to Pakistan, a key U.S. ally, the Government Accountability Office said it "found broad agreement ... that al Qaeda had regenerated its ability to attack the United States and had succeeded in establishing a safe haven" in Pakistan's Federally Administrated Tribal Areas. Of the \$10.5 billion in U.S. aid, more than half -- \$5.8 billion -- was specifically provided for the tribal region, the GAO said. Furthermore, the report said, "No comprehensive plan for meeting U.S. national security goals in FATA has been developed, as stipulated by the National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism [in 2003], called for by an independent commission [in 2004] and mandated by congressional legislation [in 2007]." "Our report does not state that the U.S. lacks agency-specific plans; rather, we found that there was no comprehensive plan that integrated the combined capabilities of Defense, State, USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development], the intelligence community," GAO said. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, U.S. officials said intelligence indicated that Osama bin Laden and other senior al Qaeda leaders, who had been based in Afghanistan before the attacks on New York and Washington, were operating in the tribal

region. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has denied that claim and has said that U.S. military missions there would violate Pakistan's sovereignty. So, since 2002, the United States has "relied principally on the Pakistan military to address U.S. national security goals" in that region, the GAO report said. Of the \$5.8 billion the United States provided for aid in the tribal region, 96 percent of it reimbursed Pakistan for military operations there, the agency said. Two of the eight lawmakers who commissioned the GAO report, Democratic Sens. Tom Harkin of Iowa and Bob Menendez of New Jersey, said it indicated a failing on the part of the Bush administration. "The Bush administration has had six years to come up with a plan to get Osama bin Laden and his group, but it is still flying by the seat of its pants," Menendez said in a statement. "We've dumped 10 billion American taxpayer dollars into Pakistan with the expectation that the terrorists will be hunted down and smoked out, but al Qaeda has been allowed to rejuvenate in the area that is supposed to be locked down," he said. Harkin called the report's findings "appalling." "The White House must propose a strategic policy in this area and follow it, especially when we have this new opportunity to forge a fresh strategic relationship with the new civilian government in Pakistan," he said in a statement. The Defense Department said it agreed with the report's findings, according to letters attached at the end of the GAO report, but the State Department disagreed with them, saying there was a comprehensive plan in place. A letter from Kathleen Turner, a spokeswoman for the office of the Director of National Intelligence, said that office and the National Counterterrorism Center concurred with the report's assessment that the United States has not met its national security goals in the tribal region but maintained that there was a plan in place. USAID said that it generally agreed with the report's recommendation for a comprehensive plan but that work in the tribal areas should be guided by the Pakistani government's own FATA Sustainable Development Plan from 2006.

### [JI declared an illegal network](#)

*Sydney Morning Herald – 22 April 2008*

An Indonesian court has declared Jemaah Islamiah an illegal organisation while jailing two of its leading figures, in a move that could foreshadow a total crackdown on the radical network. Until now, the Indonesian Government has refused to ban JI, despite members of the network being found responsible for both Bali bombings and a string of other terrorist attacks. Ministers said a ban was impractical as JI was not a "formal organisation". Yesterday the South Jakarta District Court sentenced JI's former leader Zarkasih and military commander Abu Dujana to 15 years on terrorism charges. "JI, as a corporation which one of the caretakers is the defendant, has been declared a forbidden corporation," Chief Judge Wahjono said. The "caretaker" - Dujana - was convicted of possessing and hiding ammunition and explosives with the intention of committing terrorist acts. He was also found guilty of giving money to and hiding perpetrators of terrorism, including the Bali bombings mastermind, Noordin Top. Zarkasih was jailed for becoming the spiritual leader of the organisation in 2004 and endorsing violence against Christians in the province of Poso. Both were arrested last year in a series of raids assisted by the Australian Federal Police. Declaring JI banned could allow other members of the network to be arrested and will place immense pressure on the Indonesian

Government to endorse the ban. Although legal experts were divided on the impact of the court ruling, it is understood it could give police grounds to arrest anyone belonging to JI. Without an official government ban, any arrests would be subject to challenge in the courts. Dujana and Zarkasih are likely to appeal to Indonesia's Supreme Court, which may be asked to rule on the validity of the JI ban. Abu Dujana, the military chief of the group, was arrested in June on charges of keeping explosives and sheltering fugitives wanted for a series of deadly attacks in Indonesia. Zarkasih, who was arrested only days after Dujana, was the alleged amir, or leader, of the group from 2005 until last year. Their arrests were regarded as a major blow for the group, blamed for the 2002 Bali bombings in which 202 people were killed, as well as many other attacks in Indonesia. The chief judge, Wahjono, said Dujana had been sentenced to 15 years in jail for rifles and ammunition possession and funding and harbouring other group members. The judges also sentenced Zarkasih to 15 years' jail for his membership of JI and "evil conspiracy in terror activities". An earlier charge sheet said that Zarkasih, nicknamed Mbah, had received military training in Pakistan in the late 1980s and taught map reading at a Muslim rebel camp in the southern Philippines in 1998.

## **DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY**

### [Israel May Reveal Details of Attack on Alleged Syrian Nuclear Program](#)

*The Forward* – 10 April 2008

Israel is considering disclosing classified information about alleged nuclear ties between North Korea and Syria due to concern that Washington may downplay the issue as it pursues closer ties with Pyongyang. Israeli sources say that Jerusalem holds information implicating North Korea in a nascent Syrian nuclear program, which was reportedly the target of an Israeli air strike this past September. Until now, Jerusalem has maintained a policy of deliberate ambiguity regarding the attack, but Israel is reluctantly considering opening up because of Washington's steps toward rapprochement with Pyongyang. Israel officials and American lawmakers believe that disclosing information about the attack may force Washington to maintain a firm line on North Korean nuclear proliferation. "Israel has concerns about North Korea because of its proliferation activity, but Israel doesn't want to get into a conflict over this issue or to take any action which could be viewed as opposing a policy led by Condoleezza Rice," said David Makovsky, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. To date, authoritative information about Israel's September 6, 2007, attack has been scarce. Following the air strike, the Israeli government avoided making any public statements on the incident, and even the country's famously talkative Cabinet members stayed mum on the topic. But the international media, which is not obliged to observe Israel's military censorship laws, was full of information about the attack, including "before and after" satellite images of the targeted site. The reports provide a fairly detailed account of the attack, describing its target as a partially built nuclear site being constructed using North Korean know-how. The issue re-emerged April 4, when Israeli media reported a dispute among policymakers in Jerusalem about providing official information regarding the attack. According to front-page reports in a number of leading Israeli newspapers, the information was

expected to be revealed in Washington during an April 17 briefing held by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. A spokeswoman for the committee, however, said this week that no hearing had been scheduled on issues relating to Syria, Israel or North Korea. A representative for the House Intelligence Committee also made clear that there were no plans to discuss the issue. A congressional aide, speaking on condition of anonymity due to what was described as "the extreme sensitivity of the issue," told the Forward that administration officials would be giving closed-door briefings to several members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in the near future. The briefings, according to the congressional aide, will deal with Israel's attack on Syria and with North Korea's involvement in an alleged Syrian nuclear program. Israeli officials refused to discuss the matter, citing the standing policy of not commenting on any aspect of the attack. Officials did confirm, however, that two senior advisers to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert were in Washington in early April holding discussions with administration officials. According to Israeli press reports, these discussions also touched on the issue of disclosing information about the September 6 air strike. Israel, according to press reports, is concerned mainly about alleged North Korean involvement in developing Iran's nuclear program. In the talks held by Olmert's advisers in Washington this month, the Israelis stressed the need to demand that North Korea come clean regarding its nuclear ties with Iran as part of any grand deal being negotiated by the United States, according to reports confirmed by Israeli sources in Jerusalem.

### [UK PM makes offer on Darfur peace talks](#)

*CNN* – 13 April 2008

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has offered to hold peace talks on Darfur in London, his office said Saturday. News of the offer was timed to coincide with the Global Day for Darfur on Sunday, a day of events meant to raise awareness of the suffering in the Western Sudanese region. "This is a formal offer to hold these talks in London," Brown's spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with policy. He did not specify who had been invited, and it wasn't clear how likely the talks were. Fighting has raged in <http://topics.edition.cnn.com/topics/Darfur> since 2003, when ethnic African tribesmen took up arms, complaining of decades of neglect and discrimination by the Sudanese Arab-dominated government. The Sudanese government has been accused of unleashing Arab militias known as the janjaweed forces to commit atrocities against ethnic African communities in the fight with rebel groups. The U.N. believes that far more than 200,000 people have been killed, and millions have been forced from their homes. The unwillingness of some of Darfur's divided rebel forces to participate in negotiations have scuppered past talks. In October, the two main rebel groups, the Justice and Equality Movement and SLA-Unity, boycotted peace talks in Libya. Lawmakers, actors, authors and activists plan to mark Sunday with protests, grim advertisements, and other events to raise awareness of the suffering and urge governments to do more. Harry Potter creator J.K. Rowling and other authors of children's books have signed an open letter calling for more support for the children affected by the bloodshed. "It is time to change the narrative," the letter reads. "It is time to tell a different story. This April many children in Darfur will be reaching their fifth birthdays without ever having known peace. The world needs to wake up."

## Creating a U.S.-Iran bridge

*al-Jazeera* – 13 April 2008

The upcoming second round of talks with the United States on Iraq Security offers another opportunity for U.S.-Iranian dialogue and negotiations. However, an atmosphere of mistrust between the United States and Iran persists, leaving open the potential for yet another disastrous conflict in the Middle East. Ongoing isolation and diplomatic sanctions will not reduce such a possibility. As a result, the question for most of us – both Americans and Iranians – is how can we be influential in determining our countries' future? How can we demand a workable solution, or at least a dialogue, to promote the peaceful co-existence of our two countries? Because of its geo-political location, Iran is an important power in the troubled region of the Middle East. Iran shares history, culture and religion with two of its neighbours, Iraq and Afghanistan, where America has a military presence. In addition, the country has a great deal of control over oil from the Persian Gulf. As such, it could be a welcome partner to the United States in the region. However, the Iran Hostage Crisis in 1979 created a permanent fear of Iran in American minds. For 444 days, every news agency in the east and west carried news of this unlawful act. Though the majority of Iranian citizens disapproved of the hostage taking, their opinions were rarely covered in the media, and neither were the motives that compelled these students to take American hostages. No major media spoke of the connection between this action and that of the American government's in 1953, when the CIA helped overthrow Mohammad Mossadegh, the popularly elected prime minister of Iran. Despite the link, this American fear has continued with the recent development of an Iranian nuclear programme. After the overthrow of Mossadegh, the United States had a direct hand in Iranian domestic and foreign policy during the time of the late Shah. After 1979, when the Iranian people rose against the Shah, the United States never fully understood the reasons or the consequences and resentment that resulted from its support of the Shah's regime. If the U.S. government continues to press for more sanctions against Iran and labels the Iranian Revolutionary Guards "terrorists", nothing will change for the better. Furthermore, the United States as a superpower must act fairly with the various countries in the Middle East. It should engage Iran in the resolution of regional crises, such as the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Iran is a major power in the region with vital influence on anti-Israeli movements in the area. The more Israel, and especially the United States, try to keep Iran away from important decisions in the region, the more Iranians will feel they are ignored. The United States should also stop supporting grassroots movements in Iran. In recent years, educated Iranian women have rolled up their sleeves and conducted some of the most impressive grassroots movement in the history of Iran. Alongside women's movement there have been those that have advocated for workers and students' rights. These groups all say that they don't need outside help. Since the United States has allocated \$75 million to an "Iran Democracy Fund" to support the promotion of democracy in Iran, the life of grassroots movements has become more difficult. Any direct – or indirect – help to the democratic movement in Iran coming from this fund is seen as an attempt of external regime change and prevents Iranian activists and opposition groups from contacting and engaging in dialogue with their American counterparts. The United States and Iran could, and should, work together on creating a new relationship. Their alliance will help improve the American image in the region, and

will pave the path for a more peaceful Middle East. Such an alliance cannot take place with direct military intervention; rather, it must move forward with both parties investing in mutual respect and trust. Iranians must be made to feel that their political, social, and cultural sovereignty is not, and will not be, invaded by such alliance. Building relations requires continuously striving towards better mutual understanding. The more we accept our differences and the more we respect each other's ways of life, the closer we will be to accomplishing such a goal. The first step can be a mutual agreement to stop using aggressive language and labels like the "Great Satan" and "Axis of Evil". It is then, and only then, that we may understand what "democracy" means to an Iranian, what "freedom" means to an American. American and Iranian publics need to fill the void left by our diplomats by taking direct action. We need to be informed, engaged and active. We need to become civilian diplomats. This is not a new concept; it has been around since before the Cold War. Civilian diplomats are active when the people believe their government and official diplomats cannot be of significant help in reducing political tensions and re-establishing relations. A civilian diplomat can travel to another country, study the culture and history of the "other" and at least create a civilian bridge between two countries where no other bridge exists.

[Jimmy Carter says he likely will meet with Hamas](#)

*Reuters* – 13 April 2008

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said in remarks to air on Sunday that his upcoming visit to the Middle East probably would include a meeting in Syria with leaders of the militant group Hamas. "I've not confirmed our itinerary yet for the Syrian visit, but it's likely that I will be meeting with the Hamas leaders," Carter said, according to a transcript of his interview on ABC News' "This Week." The Bush administration and close U.S. ally Israel oppose the meeting, which would take place during Carter's nine-day trip to the Middle East that begins on Sunday. U.S. policy has been to isolate Hamas, which seized control of Gaza last June, and to bolster pro-Western President Mahmoud Abbas, who rules the West Bank and is in U.S.-sponsored talks with the Israelis. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who sought Carter's counsel on his own previous Arab-Israeli peacemaking efforts ahead of a U.S.-hosted Middle East conference in Annapolis last November, called Hamas a "terrorist organization" on Friday. "I think there's no doubt in anyone's mind that, if Israel is ever going to find peace with justice concerning the relationship with their next-door neighbors, the Palestinians, that Hamas will have to be included in the process," said Carter, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. "I think someone should be meeting with Hamas to see what we can do to encourage them to be cooperative," he added. Carter, who served one term as president from 1977 to 1981, would be one of the most prominent Americans to meet with the leader of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal. "We'll be meeting with the Syrians, the Egyptians, the Jordanians, the Saudi Arabians, and with the whole gamut of people who might have to play a crucial role in any future peace agreement that involves the Middle East," Carter said of his trip.

[Abbas, Olmert hold unscheduled meeting in Jerusalem](#)

AP – 14 April 2008

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had an unscheduled meeting a day before Mr Abbas was leaving on a trip that takes him to the United States later in the month. The moderate Palestinian leader has talks scheduled for April 23 with US President George W. Bush. He was scheduled to leave on Monday for Jordan, the first leg of his trip. Sunday was the last opportunity for Mr Abbas to meet Mr Olmert, though the two talked last week. The intention appeared to be to keep the meeting at Mr Olmert's official residence a secret. In the past, their frequent sessions have been announced well in advance, and news photographers are granted some access. Sunday's meeting was confirmed only hours before it took place, and then only after The Associated Press queried officials. Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said Mr Abbas asked Mr Olmert to agree to an Egyptian initiative to arrange an unofficial cease-fire in Gaza, but Mr Olmert gave no commitment. Israel refuses to deal with Hamas. Mr Erekat said the meeting took place Sunday because Abbas was leaving Monday on the trip that will take him to the US. Months of meetings at various levels have failed to produce noticeable progress toward a peace deal. Israel and the Palestinians renewed negotiations in November at a US-hosted conference in Annapolis, Maryland, ending a seven-year impasse. The talks have been troubled by Palestinian militant attacks, by ongoing Israeli construction and military operations in the West Bank, and by the fact that Islamic Hamas militants rule Gaza. Mr Abbas controls only the West Bank. In Hamas-ruled Gaza, violence spiked after a monthlong lull. On Sunday an explosion in a Gaza house killed three people and wounded seven, Palestinian officials said. Residents said it was caused by explosives that went off prematurely. Later Sunday, a Palestinian was wounded in an Israeli airstrike on a house in Gaza City, Palestinians and the Israeli military said. Last week, militants attacked the Israeli border terminal that pipes the only fuel that reaches Gaza, killing two workers. Israel immediately shut down the terminal and launched raids that have killed 16 people since, including at least six civilians. Palestinians have warned of a looming fuel shortage, and the director of the territory's only power plant has said it would have to be shut down this week because its fuel would run out. Israeli officials said on Sunday that the fuel terminal was closed to allow authorities to investigate how the gunmen penetrated the compound. Mr Zeev Boim, an Israeli Cabinet minister, said on Sunday it would be reopened within days and called the complaints from Hamas about a fuel crisis 'absurd.' 'What audacity to carry out an attack on the fuel depot ... and then talk about a humanitarian crisis,' Mr Boim said.

[China steps forward in new bid to end Iran dispute](#)

Reuters – 16 April 2008

China edges nearer the centre of contention over Iran's nuclear ambitions on Wednesday by hosting talks of diplomatic powers on whether to offer stronger incentives to Iran to curb atomic work. The gathering of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France - plus Germany marks a first such meeting for China, which has kept away from the spotlight in the dispute. China, which has hosted six-party talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear

programme, wants to highlight its role seeking to end the impasse over Iran's efforts to enrich uranium, but also wants to avoid falling out with a key oil supplier. 'With this balance of interests, it's difficult to imagine China being a place for breakthroughs,' said Shen Dingli, an expert on nuclear politics at Fudan University in Shanghai. 'The equation of interests won't change and China isn't some magical place to solve problems. But it's important to show that China is part of the international mainstream on these issues.' Teheran insists it has the right to enrich uranium, which it says is for peaceful power. But the United States, Western European powers and their supporters fear Iran's enrichment could give it the means to make nuclear weapons. The Security Council has passed three resolutions with sanctions pressing Iran to give international inspectors more information about nuclear work and stop the enrichment. The meeting in Shanghai will discuss whether to sweeten a 2006 offer of incentives to persuade Iran to curb its nuclear programme, a Western diplomat earlier told Reuters. The six powers offered civil nuclear cooperation and wider trade in civil aircraft, energy, technology and farming, if Iran suspended uranium enrichment and negotiated with them. But Iran has ruled out halting or limiting its nuclear work in exchange for such incentives, and says it will only negotiate with the UN watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency. 'As the host, China faces expectations that it will propose or broker more concrete ideas on how to persuade Iran,' said Yin Gang, a Middle East expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. China has hosted talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear programme that have stalled in recent months but yielded steps towards dismantling atomic facilities. But in a show of defiance at the international sanctions, Iran announced last week that it had expanded its nuclear work by starting to install 6,000 more uranium enrichment centrifuges at its Natanz plant, in addition to 3,000 already there. China fears a nuclear arms race if Iran gains the ability to make nuclear weapons, said Guo Xian'gang, a former Chinese diplomat to Teheran who now works in a policy institute. But Beijing is also wary of a rupture with Iran, which is China's third biggest source of crude oil imports, behind Saudi Arabia and Angola. 'Both the United States and Iran are always unhappy with China, but if we do any more then at least one side will be even unhappier,' said Guo. 'So China's stance won't change - cooperate with the US but not too far.'

### [Iran says it will 'eliminate' Israel if it attacks](#)

*Reuters* – 16 April 2008

Iran will respond to any military attack from Israel by 'eliminating' the Jewish state, a senior army commander said on Tuesday. Deputy commander-in-chief Mohammad Reza Ashtiani was echoing Iran's late leader of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who said Israel should be wiped off the map. Some analysts have speculated that Israel might attack Iran to stop its nuclear activities, which the West fears are a front for weapons development. Iran, which does not recognise Israel, insists it wants nuclear technology only for electricity. 'If Israel wants to take any action against the Islamic Republic, we will eliminate Israel from the scene of the universe,' the semi-official Mehr news agency quoted Ashtiani as saying. 'Our answer to any military attack against Iran will be strong.' The US State Department said the comments showed the international community was right to sanction Iran. It is 'more unbelievable rhetoric out of the leadership of the Iranian government about attacking a fellow member of the

United Nations,' State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters. 'Any civilised person finds that disturbing.' Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak did not respond directly to the remarks but said Israel was pressing ahead with its efforts to counter any Iranian nuclear threat. Mr Barak told reporters at an air base in central Israel that there remained much to do in 'intelligence, in prevention and in formulating diplomatic and practical sanctions.' 'We have to prepare, and if there's a need, to take action, not just to talk idly,' he said, in apparent reference to reported remarks last week by cabinet minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer that Israel would destroy Iran if attacked. Opposition to Israel is a fundamental principle in Shi'ite Iran, which backs Palestinian militants opposed to peace with the Jewish state but says it offers only moral support. A 2005 statement by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad saying that 'Israel should be wiped off the map' outraged the international community. Washington says it wants a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear dispute but has not ruled out military action if that fails. Teheran insists it will not bow to Western pressure. Iran, the world's fourth-largest oil producer, says it has developed ballistic missiles able to hit Israel and US bases in the region. Israel's Defence Ministry has announced the successful test of the 'Blue Sparrow,' a missile that will serve as a target for tests of its Arrow anti-ballistic missile system. Israeli media have reported that the target missile would simulate the ballistic trajectory of Iran's Shehab-3 missile, which Israel fears could carry a nuclear warhead. Teheran's failure to convince world powers of its peaceful nuclear intentions has prompted three rounds of UN sanctions, and the United States is pushing for another, tougher set of penalties. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany are due to meet on April 16 in Shanghai to discuss whether to sweeten incentives offered to Iran in 2006 to curb its nuclear work.

### [Japan plans new defense policy outline](#)

*Reuters* – 20 April 2008

Japan plans to formulate a new defense policy outline to underline the need to meet China's rapid military buildup, the Yomiuri newspaper reported on Sunday. The outline, which spells out basic guidelines for Japan's defense policies, is reviewed by the government once every five years and had been revised in 1995 and in 2004 to meet changes in the international military environment, the paper said. The government initially planned to make only minor changes to the 2004 defense policy outline in the next fiscal year beginning in April 2009. But it decided to set up a new policy outline to signal more clearly the need for Japan to develop its defense capability amid China's military buildup, which is proceeding at a pace far beyond Japan's initial forecast, the Yomiuri said, without citing sources. The government will launch a panel of experts to discuss the changes and hopes to have the new outline approved at a Cabinet meeting by the end of next year, the paper said. The Yomiuri also said the Japanese, Chinese and South Korean governments plan to launch an annual trilateral summit later this year to help solve regional problems such as North Korea's nuclear development programs. The three countries are negotiating to hold the first meeting in Japan around autumn this year, the paper said.

### [Hamas to provide truce proposals with Israel](#)

Reuters – 24 April 2008

The Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas will give Egypt detailed proposals on a truce with Israel on Thursday, a Hamas spokesman said. A Hamas delegation led by former Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmoud el-Zahar arrived in Cairo on Wednesday night and has a meeting with Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman on Thursday afternoon, added spokesman Taher al-Nono. Nono declined to give details of the proposals in advance but a Palestinian official familiar with the truce talks said the Islamist movement had backed away from its earlier demand that a truce should include a ban on Israeli attacks on Hamas members in both Gaza and the West Bank. Hamas, which controls Gaza but has prominent members resident in the West Bank, has previously insisted that a truce should begin and apply at the same time to both areas. The new offer suggests a truce could begin in Gaza first and then move after an agreed period of time to the West Bank, said the Palestinian official, who asked not to be named. Under the truce proposal Palestinian factions will stop rocket attacks from Gaza and Israel will refrain from raids and targeted killings and will open up crossing points out of Gaza, especially the Rafah crossing with Egypt, he added. Israel has said it is not negotiating a truce with Hamas but would have no reason to launch attacks on the Gaza Strip if rocket fire from the territory ceased. But it says it reserves the right to take military action to protect its citizens. The Egyptian intelligence chief, who is in regular contact with the Israelis, has been trying to negotiate a truce between Israel and Hamas, especially since Palestinians broke through the border with Egypt in January to escape a long Israeli siege. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, on a Middle East tour which ended this week, tried to persuade Hamas to declare a unilateral ceasefire with Israel. Hamas declined on the grounds that Israel had not responded to similar gestures in the past. Dozens of Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza in the past 10 days. Three Israeli soldiers were killed on the border with Gaza on April 16.

## DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

### [Police to launch military-style spy planes](#)

The Times – 19 April 2008

Airborne military technology developed to track the Taleban in Afghanistan will be deployed in England to spot muggers, stolen cars and even illegal immigrants arriving by sea. Police forces in Kent and Essex have begun a development project with BAE Systems, Europe's largest defence company, to make unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) part of their arsenals. BAE's high endurance rapid technology insertion vehicle (Herti) aircraft has been used by the British military in Afghanistan to direct bombing raids and to follow the Taleban back to their bases. Some UAVs operating in Iraq and Afghanistan have been fitted with missiles that are capable of destroying enemy units when they are uncovered. Police commanders hope that such military-grade equipment will be capable of automatically detecting crimes from the air and then directing ground forces to investigate further. BAE's work with the Kent and Essex forces, called the South Coast

Partnership, is part of a wider strategy that the company is adopting to move from pure defence into security. BAE wants to generate up to £300 million a year from civilian security operations, such as providing UAVs and monitoring the surveillance feeds from closed-circuit television cameras. Alison Woods, BAE's strategy director, said: "We have the kit and we have the skills that are relevant to the security sector and our intention is to build on that." A number of police forces, including Merseyside and Strathclyde, have already deployed remote-controlled aircraft as spy-in-the-sky drones. They are used typically to monitor crime scenes and can be programmed to operate within a certain area using GPS navigation. However, modern military UAVs are significantly more advanced and can change their missions to pursue a perceived threat or a criminal. BAE has begun to work with the police to determine how the Herti can be used by officers. Some test flights are expected within three years. The biggest hurdle that the technology faces is getting approval from the Civil Aviation Authority to use civilian airspace. This is particularly important in the South East, given the proximity of Gatwick, Stansted and other airports. Richard Williams, BAE's director of civil autonomous systems, said: "UAV capabilities are already available to the military and many of the same capabilities are desirable to the police. UAVs offer police the option of persistent surveillance, keeping a set of eyes open over a large area." BAE hopes that through the South Coast Partnership it will be able to develop Herti for civilian applications for the 2012 Olympic Games when they are held in London. UAVs have a big advantage over traditional helicopter surveillance as they can stay in the air for up to 24 hours, depending on the equipment carried, rather than only two or three. In addition, they are much smaller and quieter than helicopters and military versions have been fitted with sensors to detect radiation, chemical and biological emissions. Other defence companies, including Qinetiq and Thales UK, are developing UAV technologies. Thales won a £800 million contract two years ago to build 54 Watchkeeper UAVs, which will provide battlefield intelligence to the Army. Thales said that it was considering how the technology could be used in the civilian sector. Critics said that such monitoring would add to concerns that Britain was becoming a surveillance society. Shami Chakrabarti, the director of Liberty, the human rights group, said: "It's a grave step in any democracy to use military surveillance methods against your own peacetime population. Where is the lawful authority for this policy? When was the parliamentary debate? A paradigm shift in privacy protection can't be left to cosy little deals between big business and local police."

### [Iran forced to leave defence show in M'sia for exhibiting missile products](#)

AP – 24 April 2008

Iran has been kicked out of an international defence show in Malaysia for exhibiting missile equipment in violation of UN rules, an official said on Thursday. Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak said Iranian companies were ordered out of the Defence Services Asia show on Tuesday because their exhibition was deemed 'offensive.' 'Unfortunately, when we came around to inspecting their stand, they displayed equipment that clearly contravened the UN resolution - equipment such as missiles and missile systems and others,' Mr Najib told reporters. 'The moment they crossed the line, we had no option but to terminate them,' Mr Najib added. Mr Najib said the exhibit was in defiance of UN resolutions that ban Iranian arms exports and forbid countries from

providing Iran with technical and financial assistance that could contribute to its alleged nuclear weapons program. Iran is under three sets of UN Security Council sanctions for its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment and meet other council demands designed to ease fears that its civilian nuclear programme is a cover for attempts to make atomic arms. Teheran has denied ever trying to make nuclear weapons. The Malaysian defense show, billed as one of the largest of its kind in Asia, began on Monday with hundreds of exhibitors from about 50 countries. An Iranian embassy official in Kuala Lumpur, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to make public statements, insisted the country's participation was 'not against Malaysian or international laws.' He declined to elaborate. Mr Najib said other countries participating in the show had complained about Iran's exhibition, but stressed Malaysia's decision was not due to Western pressure. He did not name the countries. The US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur declined to comment, saying it 'doesn't discuss details of diplomatic exchanges.' Malaysian authorities had informed the Iranian ambassador earlier this week about the exhibition's rules, Mr Najib said. 'We were left in a situation where we did not have any option, since Malaysia is committed to respecting and adhering to the UN resolution,' Mr Najib said.

## **NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY**

### [Israeli officials: Facebook is national security threat](#)

*CNN* – 11 April 2008

Israeli defense officials say they have identified an unlikely new threat to national security -- Facebook. A new list of rules announced Thursday aims to prevent soldiers and Defense Ministry employees from revealing classified information on social networking sites. The officials say some soldiers have uploaded pictures of themselves with classified equipment, inadvertently revealing sensitive information. The rules allow soldiers to create pages on networking sites as long as they do not identify themselves as soldiers or reveal information about what they do. They spoke on condition of anonymity because the rules have not been officially published.

### [Japan surprises with Russian fuel oil thirst](#)

*Reuters* – 13 April 2008

Japan is unexpectedly emerging as Asia's top buyer of Russian fuel oil this year as at least two of its refiners begin using it to make refined products, robbing Chinese rivals of the cheaper feedstock. Exxon Mobil's Japan affiliate TonenGeneral Sekiyu and Kyokuto Petroleum Industries, a joint venture with Mitsubishi & Co, have for several months been quietly using straight-run fuel oil from Russia, commonly known as M100, as crude prices hold near record-highs, trade sources say. Trade sources in Asia said Exxon Mobil Japan had secured a term deal with European trader Vitol for the monthly supply of 120,000-140,000 tonnes, or between three and four cargoes of the distillates-rich M100, over the next six months. As crude oil relentlessly rises, hitting a record above \$112 a barrel this week, Japanese refiners have slashed crude processing rates in a bid to cut

losses, or seeking cheaper supplies like M100, now \$27 a barrel less than crude. "As a refinery, if you mix it with another crude, you can use it as a CDU fuel... and certainly Exxon Mobil has been using Russian grade fuel oil, as a cheaper alternative fuel," a Tokyo-based trader said. As much as half a million tonnes a month of M100 is exported by refineries in Russia's Far East, traders say. An Exxon Mobil Japan spokesman confirmed the company had been buying the Russian grade heavy fuel oil but declined to provide further details. Kyokuto Petroleum declined to comment when contacted. Japan's top refiner Nippon Oil Corp is not expected to run fuel oil anytime soon, but said its rivals were.

### [China drought leaves 670,000 without drinking water](#)

*Reuters* – 13 April 2008

A drought in China's north-east Liaoning province has left nearly 700,000 people without drinking water after rainfall in the first three months of 2008 tumbled to one-fifth levels last year, the Xinhua agency said on Sunday. The area is a top grain producer, and maize and rice farming is due to begin next week, but from January to the end of March it had got less than 2cm of rain.

Some 66 reservoirs have dried up, but the area has raised cash to build 1,700 new wells and expand and upgrade water conservation systems to try and ensure spring planting can go ahead, Xinhua said, citing local sources. China's weather administration said in early April that drought parching other parts of northern China was the worst in several decades and would continue this month. Drought and floods are perennial problems in China, which has per capita water resources that are well below the global average. Its meteorologists have said global climate change is exacerbating extreme weather, including droughts. About 30 million Chinese in the countryside and more than 20 million in urban areas face drinking water shortages every year despite huge government investment to address the problem. Across China, by March 26, 19.4 million hectares of arable land had been hit by the drought, including 3.3 million hectares of cropland.

### [World leaders urge action on rising food prices](#)

*Reuters/AP* – 14 April 2008

Top finance and development officials from around the globe on Sunday called for urgent action to stem rising food prices, warning that social unrest will spread unless the cost of basic staples is contained. 'We have to put our money where our mouth is now, so that we can put food into hungry mouths. It is as stark as that,' World Bank President Robert Zoellick said at the end of a meeting of the IMF and World Bank's Development Committee. He called on governments to rapidly carry out commitments to provide the UN World Food Programme (WFP) with US\$500 million (S\$680 million) in emergency aid it needs by May 1. 'It is critical that governments confirm their commitments as soon as possible and others begin to commit,' Mr Zoellick said. 'Prices have only risen further since the WFP issued that appeal, so it is urgent that governments step up.' Mr Zoellick said that international finance meetings are 'often about talk', but he noted a 'greater sense of intensity and focus' among ministers; now, he said, they have to 'translate it into greater action'. He said the bank is granting an additional US\$10 million to Haiti for

feeding programmes, 'and I understand others are looking to help.' Mr Zoellick said the bank was responding to a number of other countries with conditional cash transfer programmes, providing food at workplaces, and seeds for planting in the new season. Concerns about food costs took on new urgency as senators in Haiti ousted the prime minister after a week of food-related rioting in which at least five people died. There have also been protests in Cameroon, Niger and Burkina Faso in Africa, and in Indonesia and the Philippines. In just two months, rice prices have shot up around 75 per cent, closing in on historic highs. Meanwhile, the cost of wheat has climbed by 120 per cent over the past year, more than doubling the price of bread in most poor countries. The problem is most worrying in developing countries where food represents a larger share of what consumers buy. He said that based on a rough analysis the bank estimates that a doubling of food prices over the last three years could potentially push people in low income countries deeper into poverty. 'This is not just a question of short term needs, as important as they are,' Mr Zoellick said. 'This is about ensuring that future generations don't pay a price too.' Mr Zoellick and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown have said the issue of skyrocketing food prices needs to be front and centre at the highest political levels. While Mr Brown said he would raise it at an upcoming meeting of the Group of Eight powerful nations, Mr Zoellick said that would be too late. 'Frankly speaking, that G8 meeting is in June and we cannot wait,' he told a news conference.

### [Melting mountains a 'time bomb' for water shortages](#)

*Reuters – 15 April 2008*

Glacier and mountain snow are melting earlier in the year than usual, meaning the water has already gone when millions of people need it during the summer when rainfall is lower, scientists warned on Monday. 'This is just a time bomb,' said hydrologist Wouter Buytaert at a meeting of geoscientists in Vienna. Those areas most at risk from a lack of water for drinking and agriculture include parts of the Middle East, southern Africa, the United States, South America and the Mediterranean. Rising global temperatures mean the melt water is occurring earlier and faster in the year and the mountains may no longer be able to provide a vital stop gap. 'In some areas where the glaciers are small they could be gone in 30 or 50 years time and a very reliable source of water, especially for the summer months, may be gone.' Ms Buytaert, from Britain's Bristol University, was referring to parts of the Mediterranean where her research is focussed but she said this threat also applies to the entire Alps region and other global mountain sources. Daniel Viviroli, from the University of Berne, believes nearly 40 per cent of mountainous regions could be at risk, as they provide water to populations which cannot get it elsewhere. He says the earth's sub-tropic zones, which are home to 70 per cent of the world's population, are the most vulnerable. And with the global population expected to expand rapidly, there may not always be enough water to drink, let alone to water crops, which use about 70 per cent of melt-water. In Afghanistan, home to some 3,500 of the world's glaciers, the effects of global warming are already being felt in the Hindu Kush said US Geological Survey researcher Bruce Molnia. 'Glaciers are getting smaller and smaller,' he said adding that this was leading to more frequent flooding. In some valleys snow has completely disappeared during months when it usually blankets the mountains and many basins have drained, Mr Molnia said. 'And what I am talking about here is

adaptable to almost every one of the Himalayan countries that's dependent on glacier-melted water,' he said. It has also been difficult to collect data in the region with scientists preferring to rely on satellite imagery rather risk fieldwork in the Taliban-occupied mountains. Ms Buytaert points out that because only a handful of scientists study the hydrology of mountains, what they don't know about them could be just as concerning as what they do. 'Mountains are seen as having water all the time and everywhere so people think they can take it all the time,' she said. 'But mountains are black boxes in the scientific sense, there is so much data missing for our models. We don't quite know what is going on.'

### [Poisonous algae bloom threatens China's Taihu Lake](#)

*AFP* – 15 April 2008

A pollution-linked algae bloom has reappeared in China's third-largest lake, prompting renewed fears for the drinking water supplies of millions of residents, state press said on Tuesday. Taihu Lake in eastern China has seen a re-emergence of algae growth that last year forced authorities to cut water supplies to 2.3 million residents of the nearby city of Wuxi last May, the People's Daily said. The lake in Jiangsu province, long celebrated through Chinese history as one of the country's most scenic bodies of water, has been massively polluted by the dumping of sewage and industrial and agricultural waste. The water crisis last year made it a symbol of China's nationwide problem of deteriorating water quality, with even Premier Wen Jiabao publicly calling for the lake to be cleaned up. Drinking supplies were cut off for days last year after residents complained of foul water coming out of their taps, causing a crisis that sparked panic hoarding of water. Authorities now fear that could happen again in coming months, the People's Daily, the Communist Party's main mouthpiece, said in a story posted on its website. Conditions were ripe for a recurrence of the problem, caused by a combination of pollution and warm weather, the paper quoted Lin Zexin, vice head of the Taihu Administrative Bureau, as saying. 'Cleaning up Taihu Lake's pollution will not be a short-term effort, but will be a protracted battle,' he said. Taihu is China's third-largest freshwater lake, covering a surface area of some 2,340 square kilometres. Algae blooms are common on many Chinese freshwater lakes and are chiefly caused by untreated sewage containing high concentrations of nitrogen, a main ingredient in detergents and fertilisers. Like much of China's environment, water quality has suffered severely amid the nation's breakneck economic growth over the past two decades. More than 70 per cent of China's waterways and 90 per cent of its underground water have been contaminated by pollution, according to government figures.

### [Crude hits record \\$117 per barrel](#)

*CNN* – 18 April 2008

Crude oil futures surged to a new trading record of \$117 a barrel on Friday following an attack on a key pipeline in Nigeria. The rally capped a week of record highs fueled by supply woes and the dollar's weakness relative to other major currencies. Gasoline futures also reached new record highs. Light, sweet crude for May delivery spiked to a new trading record of \$117 in after-hours electronic trading Friday after settling at \$116.69

per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, up \$1.83 over Thursday's settlement. It was the fifth day in a row crude prices set new records. The run-up came after the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta -- the main militant group in Nigeria's restive south -- said it had sabotaged a major oil pipeline operated by a Royal Dutch Shell PLC joint venture. The group promised further attacks on the petroleum industry in Africa's largest producer of crude oil. A spokeswoman for Shell confirmed that the pipeline was leaking, and said the damage appeared to have been caused by explosives. The contract had fallen to close to \$113 per barrel in overnight electronic trading, as the dollar strengthened against the euro and other currencies, encouraging some traders to lock in profits from crude's recent record run. In London, Brent crude futures rose \$1.49 to settle at \$113.92 a barrel on the ICE Futures exchange. A host of supply and demand concerns in the U.S. and abroad, along with the dollar's weakness, have served to support prices, even as record retail gasoline prices in the U.S. appear to be dampening demand. Crude prices have risen as much as 4 percent this week. Attacks since early 2006 on Nigerian oil infrastructure by the group have cut nearly one-quarter of the country's normal petroleum output, boosting oil prices. Nigeria is a major supplier of oil to the U.S.

### [Spain suffers worst drought](#)

*CNN* – 18 April 2008

Spain is reeling from its most severe drought in 70 years with the nation's reservoirs on average just half full, the Environment Ministry reports. Rainfall has been less than half of what's considered normal for the last six months and reservoir levels were already low after two years in which normal rain levels failed to rebound from the driest 12 months on record -- October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005. The worst-hit areas are the Catalonia region -- whose capital, Barcelona, is the nation's second-largest city -- and central Spain in the Castilla-La Mancha region near Madrid, according to Antonio Mestre, a climate specialist at the State Meteorological Agency in Madrid. The Baells reservoir near Barcelona is about 20 percent full, and in some places it appears to be bone dry. A little row boat could this week be seen resting on the sandy dirt bottom of the reservoir. In a nearby village, Gelida, trucks already bring drinking water every week because the town's three wells are too dry. It's become a political headache for Socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, who is just starting his second term. "Despite the difficult drought years," Zapatero said in the investiture debate in parliament, "there's been no shortage of drinking water anywhere in the country." But Barcelona might run out by October. The government has decided to quickly build a water pipeline for 60 kilometers (37 miles) along the major AP-7 highway, to pump water in to Barcelona, if necessary by the autumn and depending on reservoir levels at that time. The project would cost 180 million euros (\$280 million). The water would come from the Ebro river and that has sparked protests from the regional governments of Valencia and Murcia, down the Mediterranean coast from Barcelona, that the central government is favoring Barcelona. Valencia and Murcia leaders this week threatened to take the case to the Constitutional Court, the highest in Spain. Barcelona-area officials already have restricted the use of water for home gardens and parks and public fountains. They have also considered bringing drinking water in by boat. To tackle chronic water shortages, Spain in recent years has also invested heavily in desalination plants, which take the salt of sea water to

make it drinkable -- but several are not yet finished, including one that would serve Barcelona. The latest drought hits Spain just after tens of thousands of new vacation homes have sprung up en masse along the coast in recent years, along with dozens of new golf courses thirsting to stay green. "The amount of water resources depend not only on precipitation, but also on consumption," Mestre said. "The water demand in Spain has increased a lot in the last 10 or 15 years." Despite recent showers, the past six months are the driest period in Spain in 70 years, when record-keeping began, Mestre said. Farmers also compete for the water, to irrigate their fields, which are suffering in the latest drought. Some critics say that successive Spanish governments have repeatedly taken short term measures during droughts, rather than making long-term water-use plans. One old fisherman at the Riosequillo reservoir - an hour north of Madrid and just a third full despite the recent rains - said he'd never seen it so bad. "We'd have so much progress," said Gregorio Consentini, the 78-year-old fisherman, "but we're doing badly." To make matters worse, he didn't catch any fish that day -- which he also blamed on the drought.

### [Scarred and depressed, more Afghans turn to drugs](#)

*Reuters* – 20 April 2008

Scarred by decades of turmoil and grief, 66 percent of Afghans suffer from depression or some form of mental disorder, and an increasing number are turning to illegal drugs, a top health official said. Afghan deputy health minister for technical affairs Faizullah Kakar said mental illness and drug abuse were the most urgent health problems that the country now needs to tackle. "It's like a bunch of very dry wood, something very little can ignite a population that's depressed (resulting in violence). It affects many institutions, people in government, parliament," Kakar said in a wide-ranging interview with Reuters. "Sixty-six percent doesn't spare those of us who work in the government, it affects progress. Depressed people don't like to work. The immediate problems are suicide ... family violence, drug addiction," he said over the weekend. "Depressed people like to take drugs and they get more depressed, it's a vicious cycle, this is what we see in Afghanistan. Drugs have mixed up with depression and we have an expansion of the number of people who are at risk." Afghanistan is the world's number one producer of opium, from which heroin is derived. It had an estimated 920,000 drug addicts a few years ago. "This may be greater now," Kakar said. With only two psychiatrists working in the state sector in a country of 26 million people, it is hard to imagine how Afghanistan can cope. "We must train doctors in the basics of mental health so they can go to villages and identify patients with mental problems and help them. This is the most urgent health issue," Kakar said. More public education is needed as most Afghans have never even heard of anti-depressants, he said.

## MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

### [101st Airborne Takes Over for 82nd Airborne in Afghanistan](#)

*American Forces Press Service* – 10 April 2008

On the 101st day of 2008, the headquarters of the 101st Airborne Division officially became Combined Joint Task Force 101 and took command of NATO's Regional Command East sector of Afghanistan from the 82nd Airborne Division. In a ceremony here today, Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, commander of the 101st Airborne and CJTF 101, praised 82nd Airborne soldiers for their effective service over the past 15 months to improve the lives of the Afghan people, and promised to continue in that mission. "We pledge to work together with our coalition and Afghan partners in an effort to build a strong government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan [and] to improve the quality of life for the people of Afghanistan, who have seen too much violence and terror over the last 30 years," Schloesser said. He added that the transition of authority also reflects the total commitment of NATO, its International Security Assistance Force and the U.S. government to the security and prosperity of the Afghan government. "The purpose of the ceremony today is not about words," said Army Maj. Gen. David M. Rodriguez, outgoing commander of RC East and commander of 82nd Airborne Division, from Fort Bragg, N.C. "It is about better opportunities for the future of the Afghan people, and it is about the coalition's enduring commitment to this nation." Since the Taliban era, Afghanistan has added 8,000 schools and 140,000 teachers, Rodriguez said. About 70 percent of girls and 97 percent of boys in Regional Command East now have access to a state-sponsored education, as well as access to basic health care that has increased to nearly 80 percent, he said. This has resulted in a 25 percent reduction in infant mortality, adding up to about 90,000 lives. "All of that is a large investment in a prosperous future for Afghanistan," Rodriguez said. "We pledge that we will continue to support the Afghan national security forces as they provide security for the Afghan people by working together with our coalition and alliance partners and interagency organizations," Schloesser said. Regional Command East is made up of 14 provinces in eastern Afghanistan, bordering Pakistan. The 101st Airborne Division, known as the "Screaming Eagles," is based out of Fort Campbell, Ky. About 7,200 soldiers from the division's headquarters, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade and 101st Sustainment Brigade are now serving in Afghanistan as part of CJTF 101. The division's 1st, 2nd and 3rd Brigade Combat Teams currently are deployed to Iraq.

### [US Navy approached by unknown boats in Gulf](#)

*Reuters* – 12 April 2008

Three boats approached a US Navy vessel at high speed in Gulf waters on Thursday but stopped after it fired a flare, the US Fifth Fleet said. The incident followed a confrontation in January, when the United States said Iranian boats aggressively approached three US Naval ships and warned that they would explode. Iran said that was a routine contact. 'The USS Typhoon, a patrol craft, was approached by three high speed boats of unknown origin,' a spokeswoman for the Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet said on Friday. She said the US vessel, which was sailing from the central to the northern part of

the Gulf, tried to communicate with the boats by routine methods but decided to fire the flare after receiving no response. 'The small boats then stopped and fell out of the visibility range and nothing further happened,' she said, adding that the boats bore no flag or markings identifying their origins or purpose. The Gulf is vital to world oil shipments, with around 17 million barrels per day of crude oil, over a third of total global shipments, passing through the waterway. A US Defence Department official in Washington said Thursday's incident was not viewed as serious. 'They (US Navy officials) did not view it as a serious or credible threat,' the official said. Tensions between Washington and Teheran are already high over Iran's nuclear programme. Iran says its nuclear programme is aimed at electricity generation but the United States suspects it wants to develop atomic bombs.

### [Military: Hellfire missile overshoots mark, injures troops](#)

*CNN* – 13 April 2008

A U.S. missile overshoot its target and struck a troop vehicle, injuring two U.S. soldiers and two Iraqi civilians, and setting houses on fire in eastern Baghdad, the military said. The accidental strike on the U.S. vehicle came Saturday as U.S. and Iraqi security forces battled Shiite militants in the capital, fighting that continued into Sunday. An "air weapons team" spotted militants setting up roadside bombs in the New Baghdad district Saturday afternoon and launched a Hellfire missile, the military said. Fighting erupted more than a week ago as the coalition forces worked to stop roadside bombings and rockets that are being launched toward central Baghdad's International Zone. The Hellfire missile fired by the U.S. military "overshot its intended target and struck a coalition forces vehicle, starting it and nearby houses on fire," the military said. The militants escaped, the military said. One American soldier suffered hearing loss; the other broke a leg, the military said. "This afternoon's events are unfortunate and our apologies go out to those innocent civilians who were affected," said U.S. military spokesman Col. Bill Buckner. "We take every precaution possible when going after the enemy, an enemy who has no concern for the safety or security of the Iraqi people." Just before the incident, a Hellfire missile hit a group of militants placing bombs in the same area, killing two of them, the military said.

### [UN cop shot dead as Haiti violence continues](#)

*AP* – 14 April 2008

A United Nations police officer was dragged from his car and shot dead as violence flared in Haiti's capital following the dismissal of the country's prime minister and the announcement of a plan to slash the price of rice. Haiti's government had hoped that the rice subsidy as well as Parliament's firing of Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis on Saturday would defuse rage over rising food prices that has produced days of deadly rioting and looting. But later on Saturday, a Nigerian UN officer bringing food to his unit was pulled from a car and killed execution style with a gunshot to his neck in Port-au-Prince, UN officials said. The officer, identified in a forensics report as Corporal Nagya Aminu, 36, drove a marked UN vehicle into a crowded clothing market near the cathedral before he was attacked, UN police spokesman Fred Blaise said. The incident is the first

execution-style killing of a UN peacekeeper since the mission came to Haiti in 2004. Two Haitian men were detained for questioning, including a local television journalist who was covering the incident. Many in the crowd chanted 'Down with MINUSTAH', referring to the UN mission by its French acronym, even as several market stalls were set on fire after the killing. The attack came hours after Haitian lawmakers ousted Mr Alexis, whom they blamed for not boosting food production and refusing to set a timetable for the departure of UN peacekeepers. 'I think that will satisfy the people,' opposition senator Youri Latortue said after 16 senators out of 27 voted to remove the prime minister on Saturday. President Rene Preval immediately said he would seek a replacement for the ousted Mr Alexis, who took office in 2006. About 25 people gathered outside Parliament after the dismissal, chanting 'Aristide or death', referring to exiled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Some residents felt their plight would not improve regardless of the dismissal of the prime minister. 'Alexis left? What's the difference?' asked Mr Jackson Aubri, a 28-year-old chicken vendor. Earlier in the day, Mr Preval had announced a more than 15 per cent cut in the price of rice. Globally, food prices have risen 40 per cent since mid-2007. Haiti has been particularly affected because it imports nearly all of its food, including more than 80 per cent of its rice.

### [South Korean troops on standby over bird flu alert](#)

*AFP* – 16 April 2008

Korea on Wednesday issued a nationwide bird flu alert and put troops and firefighters on standby to try to contain the spread of the disease, officials said. The agriculture ministry said in a statement the 'orange' vigilance level was extended to the whole country after previously covering only the badly hit south-west. The ministry said it had confirmed 20 outbreaks involving the H5 virus, of which at least six were the deadly H5N1 strain, since the first case was reported in Gimje, 260km south of Seoul, in early April. It is investigating 14 more suspected cases, including one on a farm in Pyeongtaek, 70 km south of Seoul. Officials have slaughtered 2.2 million chickens and ducks in and around infected farms, which are mainly in the South and North Jeolla provinces, a hub of the poultry industry. The defence ministry said it was ready to help. 'As avian influenza is spreading, the military has decided to help slaughter and bury poultry in the infected areas,' a spokesman said. 'We are ready to deploy soldiers any time, even today, if requested by the local governments.' About 180 soldiers are already manning checkpoints in the Gimje area to help control movements in infected areas. The National Emergency Management Agency ordered local firefighters to be ready to help with disinfecting vehicles and farms or other tasks, although it said they would not take part in culls. 'We'll do whatever we can do to prevent the bird flu outbreaks from spreading nationwide, which is now a national concern,' said Mr Kim Kook-Rae, a senior agency official. Authorities have yet to fully explain why the outbreaks are not abating, but said on Tuesday that a poultry dealer was under investigation for breaching quarantine restrictions. The dealer was found to have taken hundreds of ducks from an infected Gimje farm and supplied them to retailers and restaurants in other regions. The agriculture ministry said it had located 141 restaurants or farms which had recently been visited by the dealer, and had so far culled poultry at 34 of the total.

[Attacks force U.N. to cut Darfur food relief](#)

*CNN* – 17 April 2008

Attacks on its humanitarian convoys are forcing the U.N. World Food Programme to cut the rations it provides to millions of hungry people in Sudan's war-stricken Darfur region by about half, the agency said Thursday. The cuts are to start in May, the WFP said, because "banditry against WFP-contracted trucks is preventing sufficient stocks of vital food relief from getting through." Kenro Oshidari, WFP representative in Sudan, said in a written statement that the Sudanese government provides some police escorts for convoys on the main routes, "but unfortunately the frequency is not enough to maintain the food pipeline." Oshidari said a meeting is planned to increase the convoys, and appealed to the rebels to ensure security on the roads. "If the security situation on the roads improves, we will be able to restore the ration levels," he said. Josette Sheeran, WFP's executive director, issued a statement saying that "attacks on the WFP food pipeline are an attack on the most vulnerable people in Darfur. With up to 3 million people depending on us for their survival in the upcoming rainy season, keeping WFP's supply line open is a matter of life and death. We call on all parties to protect the access to food." Ahead of the rainy season, which lasts from May into September, WFP trucks should be delivering 1,800 metric tons (1,984 short tons) of food to warehouses in Darfur, WFP said. However, deliveries have dropped to fewer than 900 metric tons (992 short tons) per day, it said. Since January, 60 WFP-contracted trucks have been hijacked in Darfur, the agency said. More than half -- 39 -- are still missing, and 26 drivers are unaccounted for. One driver was killed in Darfur last month, WFP said. The United Nations estimates that violence in Darfur has killed more than 200,000 people and displaced at least 2 million. The United States has described the violence in Darfur as "genocide," with nomadic Arab militias targeting pastoral black Africans. A U.N. commission concluded in 2005 that the Sudanese government and militias "conducted indiscriminate attacks, including killing of civilians, torture, enforced disappearances, destruction of villages, rape and other forms of sexual violence, pillaging and forced displacement." The WFP also has had difficulty with its trucks elsewhere in Sudan. Last week, a trucker for WFP and his assistant were shot and killed in southern Sudan while they were delivering food, the agency said. The incident occurred near Mayom, not far from where two WFP-contracted drivers were stabbed to death last month.

[Petraeus picked to lead Central Command](#)

*CNN* – 23 April 2008

Army Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, has been chosen to become chief of U.S. Central Command, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Wednesday. Petraeus would replace Adm. William Fallon, who said last month that he was resigning. Fallon said widespread, but false, reports that he was at odds with the Bush administration over Iran had made his job impossible. In addition, Gates said, Army Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, commander of the Multinational Corps-Iraq -- the No. 2 position in Iraq -- is being nominated to fill Petraeus' post. Odierno has been home from Iraq for only a couple of months but has agreed to return, Gates said. The plan is for Petraeus to leave Iraq in late summer or early fall, Gates said, to ensure a smooth transition and

plenty of time for Odierno to prepare. "We expect to move the paperwork on these nominations to the White House and to the Senate very quickly," Gates said. "Because of the complexity of this series of moves, I respectfully ask the Senate to move on them expeditiously, hopefully by Memorial Day, so the families and we can plan appropriately." Odierno was in line for a Pentagon desk job as Army Vice Chief just over a year after helping Petraeus implement the "surge" in U.S. troops in Iraq. The Pentagon says Petraeus will stay in Iraq long enough to make the first recommendation on further troop cuts after the surge is over. Gates said the generals' promotions reflected an endorsement of the current course in Iraq. "The course certainly that Gen. Petraeus has set has been a successful course. So, frankly, I think staying that course is not a bad idea. I would say it's a good idea," Gates said. Central Command, which oversees U.S. forces in East Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, has its headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. Gates said Odierno is well known to troops in Iraq, to military leadership and to Iraqis, and "I believe, in most parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, personal relationships make a difference."

### [Turkish army says it strikes PKK group in Northern Iraq](#)

*Reuters – 24 April 2008*

Turkish warplanes fired on a group of Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq on Wednesday as they tried to cross into Turkey, the army said on Thursday. The army statement came a day after a military source said at least four Turkish military jets bombed Kurdish separatist targets inside northern Iraq. "A group of armed PKK/KONGRA-GEL terror organization members, who were trying to cross into Turkey from northern Iraq's Hakurk region, were spotted and neutralized by fire from aircraft of the Air Forces," the statement said. It gave no further details, but "neutralized" generally means killed. On Wednesday, a spokesman for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerrilla group said Turkish planes bombed a remote part of northern Iraq but no one was hurt. A PKK spokesman denied the Turkish army statement and said the Turkish bombing had caused no casualties among the rebels. "The Turkish news is false. There was a fierce battle between Turkish forces and the PKK in the area of Sirnak (in southeastern Turkey) yesterday. It lasted for hours," Ahmed Danees, PKK spokesman in northern Iraq, said. "There were killed and wounded on the Turkish side," he said. The Turkish military staged an eight-day incursion in northern Iraq in February against the PKK, which uses northern Iraq as a base to launch attacks on targets inside Turkey. Ankara blames the separatist group for the deaths of 40,000 since 1984, when the group took up arms to carve out an ethnic homeland in southeast Turkey. The United States and the European Union, along with Turkey, consider the PKK a terrorist organization.

## NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

### [British, Russian Support May Not Save Ambitious Nuclear Power Club](#)

*World Politics Review* – 10 April 2008

After hesitating several years, the British government finally accepted American entreaties to join the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), becoming its 21st member on Feb. 26, 2008. Celebrating the British decision, Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman said "This important addition provides great momentum for GNEP." In the U.S.-Russia Strategic Framework Declaration, issued by Presidents George Bush and Vladimir Putin at their April 6 summit at the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi, the two governments reaffirmed their commitment to promote nuclear nonproliferation by "working together and with other nations to develop mutually beneficial approaches for economical and reliable access to nuclear energy designed to permit states to gain the benefits of nuclear energy and to create a viable alternative to their acquisition of sensitive fuel cycle technologies." The declaration explicitly cited GNEP as contributing to this effort. The British and Russian endorsements provide welcome support for the initiative as well as for the global revival of nuclear power more broadly. Nevertheless, the GNEP remains in trouble, both internationally and within the United States. The stated dual purpose of the partnership, launched by the Bush administration in February 2006, is to develop new technologies and new fuel-lending arrangements to allow for the expanded use of nuclear energy globally without encouraging further nuclear weapons proliferation. In implementing the program, the Department of Energy has pursued four broad objectives: decrease U.S. reliance on foreign energy sources without impeding U.S. economic growth; employ improved technologies to recover more energy and reduce waste when recycling spent nuclear fuel; encourage the use of energy sources that emit the least atmospheric greenhouse gasses; and reduce the threat of nuclear proliferation. Moscow's endorsement for GNEP was unsurprising given that Russia has participated as a partner in the initiative for several years now. The United Kingdom's decision to join was more significant. The British government clearly felt cross-pressured. On the one hand, the British authorities did not want to stoke further controversy about their plans to keep nuclear power an important component of Britain's new energy mix -- as well as their recent reaffirmation of their determination to retain a nuclear weapons arsenal for the foreseeable future. On the other hand, as a country with important -- and exportable -- civilian nuclear energy technologies, as well as a concern with international nonproliferation and nuclear waste management issues, the British government concluded that the benefits of joining GNEP -- specifically, the ability to influence the partnership's decisions -- outweighed these reservations. Britain's entry followed signs that GNEP has been gaining steady international support. In September 2007, the members agreed to a statement of principles to guide their work. All new members, including Britain, must pledge to adhere to its tenets. In December 2007, GNEP held its first steering meeting, which adopted an action plan that laid the groundwork for future cooperation under its auspices. At the meeting, the U.S. was elected to chair the group, with China, France, and Japan as vice-chairs, for a two-year term. Nevertheless, the GNEP has had difficulty securing the support of important countries. The Indian government, which is deciding whether to commit to a separate bilateral civil nuclear energy agreement with the United

States, has declined invitations to join GNEP. Many Indians worry that doing so might constrain their ability to enrich uranium, suspecting that India would not receive the same right to develop and sell civilian nuclear technologies as the established nuclear powers due to its commingled civilian and military nuclear programs. South Africa has thus far declined to join GNEP. Its government fears that participation would impede the country's ambitions to resume uranium enrichment and sell it on the international market. During the Cold War, South Africa manufactured several nuclear bombs through uranium enrichment. Its post-apartheid government has already announced plans to construct new nuclear reactors and fuel them using indigenously manufactured enriched uranium. South African authorities have expressed an interest in collaborating with foreign governments to develop nuclear enrichment capabilities, but outside the GNEP. Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, and Turkey have yet to advance from candidate or observer status. Each has announced plans to expand their use of nuclear power as well as enrich at least some of their own fuel, making the governments wary of fully committing to GNEP's nonproliferation goals. American officials have sought to assuage these fears. They stress that GNEP members will not need to forswear the right to enrich uranium and that GNEP policies would be determined by a multinational steering committee governed by the principle of consensus.

### [An Israeli view of the Iranian nuclear challenge](#)

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Today's Iran is multi-layered. It is an imperial power, just as Persia was once an imperial power toward the Middle East and other parts of the world. It is also a regional power, one of the largest states in the Middle East demographically (66 million people), along with Turkey, Egypt and Israel. Iran has long had aspirations to lead the region, not just under the current regime. The current regime represents another, Islamic layer in Iran's identity as a state. This layer has been very clear since the Islamic Revolution in 1979; Iran propagates a particular, very radical version of Islam, and has a jihadist agenda to spread this version of Islam everywhere - not only to Palestine but also to Andalusia (Spain of today), once the domain of the Islamic empire. To put today's Iran in strategic terms, I would use Yehezkel Dror's category of crazy states, which means that it a state that has far-reaching goals, much beyond its border, it is revisionist, it has a great commitment to achieve those goals, it is even willing to pay a heavy price domestically in order to achieve its goals, and it has a quite unconventional style, which one sees, for example, in how Ahmadinejad speaks about Israel. This is quite unusual in today's international discourse. Why does Iran want nuclear weapons? First, as an insurance policy for the regime, which fully understands that it is more difficult to destabilize a country armed with nuclear weapons. Outsiders do not know what kind of people will get their hands on the weapons in case of an external intervention designed to destabilize the regime—witness what is happening nowadays in Pakistan. The US administration accepted Musharraf the dictator; we did not want anyone to mess with nuclear weapons. Moreover, a nuclear weapon is in Iran's view a weapon able to deter an American invasion. As a member of the "Axis of Evil," they observe that the US preferred to attack Iraq, which did not have nuclear weapons at that time, rather than go after North Korea, which had a much more advanced program. Tehran also views the nuclear weapon as a

way to achieve regional hegemony in a way similar to how the French looked upon it. It signifies a certain status in the region. They believe that their past entitles them to have a nuclear bomb and to put them in the same rank as the large, important powers of the world. Finally, Iran's nuclear program is also designed to try to block western influence in the region. Iranians have a very ambivalent attitude toward the West. On the one hand, they see it as a dying, decadent civilization, but at the same time they are very much afraid of the corrupting influence of western culture and morals. The Iranians' nuclear strategy is simple: it's to talk and build. They are ready to talk. The bazaars of Tehran offer good guidance in how to bargain with the west, and the gullible west has been ready to talk to Iranians already for 15 years, and we all know the result of the talk and diplomacy. It's basically a North Korean model; North Korea adopted the same strategy and was successful. Tehran is ready to talk to the Europeans, the International Agency on Atomic Energy, but its goal is to gain time. It wants to bring about a *fait accompli* and present the world with an Iranian bomb. An Iranian nuclear bomb would be very dangerous. A nuclear Iran will be a clear threat to anyone in the radius of its range - they now have a missile with a range exceeding 2000-2500 km, within which is the whole Middle East, Eastern Europe, India, Pakistan, even part of China. It is a real threat to a very large area. At the systemic level, Iran challenges American dominance in world affairs. Seeing America as the enemy, Iran allies itself with people like Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. It is in the company of North Korea. An Iranian nuclear bomb will be a poke in America's eye. It will be very dangerous to the NPT regime, which to its credit has to some extent stabilized many regions of the world and been successful at preventing nuclear proliferation. An Iranian nuclear bomb, like the North Korean nuclear explosion, will be an additional blow to this type of arms control diplomacy. Nuclear weapons will give Iran tremendous influence over the energy sector of the world economy. Not only is Iran situated along the Gulf, but it also is located along the Caspian Sea. We can speak about an energy ellipse which encompasses the Caspian Basin and the Gulf area that includes some 70-80 percent of the world's oil reserves. Nuclear weapons will give them great influence over the countries in that region and a much greater voice in the area of energy. As long as the world consumes oil and gas, as it will have to for some time to come, I don't think it's a good idea to give the Iranians even a larger voice in that sector. A nuclear Iran will also embolden all radicals, Islamists as well as others, and allow them to feel that they have a nuclear umbrella, a strong country they can rely upon that plays an important role in world affairs.

### [Pakistan tests long-range ballistic missile](#)

*Reuters* – 19 April 2008

Pakistan successfully test fired a long-range, nuclear-capable ballistic missile on Saturday, the military said, in the first missile test under a new government installed last month. "The missile Hatf-VI (Shaheen-2) has a range of 2000 km (1,200 miles) and can carry both nuclear and conventional warheads," the military said in a statement. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani watched the test of the surface-to-surface missile and congratulated engineers and scientists for achieving an "important milestone" in Pakistan's quest for sustaining strategic balance in South Asia, it said. Nuclear-armed Pakistan and India routinely carry out missile tests despite a peace process they launched

in early 2004. The South Asian neighbors, who conducted tit-for-tat nuclear weapons tests in 1998, inform each other of missile tests in advance. The military cited Gilani as saying the missile and nuclear program enjoyed complete national consensus and would continue to be consolidated and strengthened. "He made it clear that Pakistan's strategy of credible minimum deterrence is fully in place and is a guarantee of peace in the region," the military said. Gilani also gave an assurance that the country's defense needs would remain a high priority with the elected government, the military said. Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee is due to visit Pakistan next month for a review of the peace process. Pakistan and India have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947, and came close to a fourth in 2002.

### [US to hold nuclear talks in Pyongyang April 22-23](#)

*Reuters* – 19 April 2008

A US team will have talks in Pyongyang next Tuesday and Wednesday on how to verify any declaration North Korea may make about its nuclear programs, the US State Department said on Friday. The team will include US diplomat Sung Kim and nuclear experts from other agencies, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters. North Korea's failure to issue the declaration when it was due on Dec 31 has bogged down a 2005 multilateral deal under which the poor, communist state committed eventually to abandon all nuclear weapons and programs. The so-called six-party agreement was hammered out among the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States. The declaration has been held up partly because of Pyongyang's reluctance to discuss any transfer of nuclear technology to other countries, notably Syria, as well as to account for its suspected pursuit of uranium enrichment. Uranium enrichment could provide North Korea with a second way to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons in addition to its plutonium-based program, which it used to test an atomic device in October 2006. Last week sources familiar with the matter said the declaration may be split into one part that will describe its plutonium program and a second part that will address the uranium enrichment and proliferation issues. Under a face-saving formula being discussed, the sources said the United States would put forward its concerns about uranium enrichment and nuclear proliferation and North Korea would then 'acknowledge the US concerns.' They said Pyongyang would produce its declaration at about the same time as the United States began taking steps to remove sanctions on Pyongyang stemming from its inclusion on the US state sponsors of terrorism list and under the Trading with the Enemy Act.

### [Source: Intel shows N. Korea-Syria nuclear link](#)

*CNN* – 23 April 2008

U.S. intelligence officials will tell members of Congress on Thursday that North Korea was helping Syria build a nuclear facility, according to a source familiar with internal administration discussions. The facility in question was bombed by Israeli planes in September. The United States and Israel have refused to comment on what the target of the strike was. Some members of Congress have demanded to know what information the administration has about the incident. Thursday's briefings to intelligence, foreign

relations and armed services committees in both chambers of Congress are intended to show that the building hit was a North Korean-designed reactor being built with assistance from Pyongyang, the source said. It is less clear whether North Korea had provided or was about to provide essential fuel components to Syria, according to the source. Syria's ambassador to the United States criticized the Bush administration for the plan. "This will be a ridiculous and pathetic charade," Imad Moustafa told CNN, adding that Syria has never had any nuclear project. "All the accusations are absurd and preposterous," he said. Moustafa told CNN the briefing was motivated by a constituency that is angry about the nuclear negotiations the United States is holding with North Korea and that is targeting Syria to help make its case. "This is exactly the same story as Iraq and its weapons of mass destruction," he said. "There is a proven record of this administration to fabricate lies." The briefings could complicate the six-party talks at which the United States and other major world powers are trying to get North Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions. Pyongyang has resisted disclosing its proliferation activities. The United States has softened its demand that North Korea publicly admit to having a program to develop highly enriched uranium and to having provided Syria with nuclear technology, key questions that have left the negotiations stalled for months. Officials said the United States concluded that it is more important to get a handle on the program than to have North Korea "confess" past nuclear sins. The original agreement in the six-party talks did not deal with proliferation, but Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said last week that it was important to do so "in light of some recent concerns about North Korean activities in proliferation." "Syria is most certainly an issue in proliferation," she said, adding, "We have several nonproliferation questions on the table about North Korea." State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, "The negotiations on the six-party talks and all the actions the parties take will be judged on their own merits."