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CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

[Israel, Syria Prepared for Conflicts as Tension Rises](#)

Janes Defence Weekly – 8 June 2007

Tensions are rising between Israel and Syria, amid fears that a war of words could escalate into conflict. Both sides have declared their preparedness for a conflict, but each is stressing that it does not intend to initiate any confrontation. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert appointed a ministerial committee on 6 June to review the Israel Defence Force's (IDF's) operational plans against Syria, while at the same time exploring options of renewing a political process with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

[Getting Real in Iraq](#)

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – 7 June 2007

Current debates over the funding of the war in Iraq fail to address the imperative of a new political strategy for that country. Everybody agrees in theory that a political agreement is the only hope for Iraq, because military efforts alone cannot restore stability. In practice, the United States has not had a real political strategy since the 2005 elections, but continues pushing the same old measures: a revision of the constitution, a reversal of the de-Baathification policy, legislation that will share oil revenue equitably and the disarming of militias. Iraqis have failed for well over a year to reach an agreement on those issues.

[The Enemy's New Tools in Iraq](#)

Times Magazine – 14 June 2007

Saif Abdallah says his inventions have helped kill or maim scores, possibly hundreds, of Americans. For more than four years, he has been developing remote-control devices that Sunni insurgents use to detonate improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the roadside bombs that are the No. 1 killer of U.S. soldiers in Iraq. The only time he ever felt a pang of regret was in the spring of 2006, when he heard that the Pentagon, in a bid to fight the growing IED menace, had roped in a team of scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Abdallah, an electronics engineer by training, once dreamed of studying for a Ph.D. there. "I thought to myself, If my life had gone differently, who knows? I might have been on that team," he says, his eyes widening as he imagines that now impossible scenario. Then he shrugs. "God decided I should be on the other side."

[Palestinian Split Deepens; Government in Chaos](#)

New York Times – 15 June 2007

The Palestinian territories seemed headed Thursday to a turbulent political divide. Masked Hamas gunmen took control of the Gaza Strip and the Fatah president dissolved the 3-month-old unity government, declaring a state of emergency and plans for elections. An aide to President Mahmoud Abbas announced the decrees, including the

firing of Prime Minister Ismail Haniya of Hamas, at a West Bank news conference after Hamas militias overran Fatah strongholds in Gaza, dragging men into the street and shooting them. The territories that President Bush said he wanted to see become a state before he left office appeared torn asunder. With Hamas controlling Gaza, it was not clear that Mr. Abbas had the power to carry out his decrees. A Hamas spokesman in Gaza, Sami Abu Zuhri, dismissed them. "Prime Minister Haniya remains the head of the government, even if it was dissolved by the president," Mr. Zuhri said. "In practical terms these decisions are worthless."

DEFENCE STRATEGY

[China and India Announce Joint Army Exercise](#)

Janes Defence Weekly – 14 June 2007

Long-time rivals China and India will hold their first joint army exercise in October in an effort at further augmenting bilateral ties, military officials said in New Delhi on 6 June. Army chief General J J Singh said 100 Indian soldiers will conduct anti-terrorism exercises in China as part of an "engagement and mutual confidence building" process. The two armies participated in a joint mountaineering expedition two years ago, while the Indian and Chinese navies conducted day-long manoeuvres in 2003 and in April this year. The upcoming army exercise follows Gen Singh's visit to China at the end of May.

[Australia, Japan Commit to Further Defence Co-operation](#)

Janes Defence Weekly – 8 June 2007

Australia and Japan have held their first 'two-plus-two' meeting following the breakthrough Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Co-operation (JDSC) concluded in March 2007, but an expected announcement on active co-operation in missile defence did not materialise. The inaugural Japan-Australia Joint Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations took place in Tokyo on 6 June. This brought together delegations headed by Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Aso and Minister of Defence Fumio Kyuma on the one side and Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer and Minister for Defence Brendan Nelson on the other.

[Japan Reiterates Importance of Missile-Defence Programme with US](#)

Janes Defence Weekly – 6 June 2007

Japan's involvement in the US-led missile-defence programme remains vital, regardless of a solution to the North Korean nuclear issue, in view of a hypothetical "terrorist" threat, Japanese Defence Minister Fumio Kyuma has said. Kyuma made the comment while speaking at a security conference in Singapore on 2 June. Tokyo is investing vast sums in developing a joint missile-defence system with the US. This includes upwards of USD1 billion for research and development centred on the SM-3 (Standard Missile 3) Block 2 anti-ballistic missile, as well as its acquisition of the Raytheon MIM-104 Patriot

PAC-3 low- to high-altitude land-based air-defence system and upgrade of Japan's four Kongou-class air-warfare destroyers.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[Are You Talking to Me?](#)

The Economist – 7 June 2007

ALEX CASTRO has been patient. Ever since his teenage years, when he volunteered to work on speech-recognition projects during an internship at AT&T Bell Labs, Mr Castro has been waiting for the technology to work well enough to become widely adopted. “I always felt that voice recognition was a technology that would someday be applied to mainstream uses,” he says. While waiting for “someday” to arrive, the 32-year-old had time to finish his college degree, earn a Masters at Cornell, do a stint at Microsoft's MSN Entertainment business and oversee the launch of Amazon's Mechanical Turk online marketplace. Now Mr Castro has finally started his own firm, called Pluggd, a podcast directory with a nifty audio search-engine that can search audio clips (and the soundtracks of video clips) for keywords, using speech-recognition technology. “This is a huge market opportunity,” he says.

[Robot Wars](#)

The Economist – 7 June 2007

WAR is expensive and it is bloody. That is why America's Department of Defence wants to replace a third of its armed vehicles and weaponry with robots by 2015. Such a change would save money, as robots can be much cheaper to replace than people. Just as importantly for the generals, it would make waging war less prey to the politics of body bags. Nobody mourns a robot. The Pentagon already routinely uses robotic aeroplanes known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). In November 2001 two missiles fired from a remote-controlled Predator UAV killed Mohammad Atef, al-Qaeda's chief of military operations and one of Osama bin Laden's most important associates, as he drove his car near Kabul. But whereas UAVs and their ground-based equivalents, such as the machinegun-toting Sword robots, are usually controlled by distant human operators, the Pentagon would like to give these robots increasing amounts of autonomy, including the ability to decide when to use lethal force.

[Guessing Robots Predict Their Environments for Better Navigation](#)

Space War – 14 June 2007

Engineers at Purdue University are developing robots able to make "educated guesses" about what lies ahead as they traverse unfamiliar surroundings, reducing the amount of time it takes to successfully navigate those environments. The method works by using a new software algorithm that enables a robot to

create partial maps as it travels through an environment for the first time. The robot refers to this partial map to predict what lies ahead.

[Robots Could Fetch Injured Soldiers from Battlefield](#)

Space War – 8 June 2007

U.S. researchers are developing a remote-controlled robot designed to rescue injured or abducted soldiers without putting their comrades at risk. The prototype of the nearly 6-foot-tall Battlefield Extraction-Assist Robot, called Bear, can lift nearly 300 pounds with one arm, and its developer, Vecna Technologies of College Park, Md., is focusing on improving its two-legged lower body.

ENERGY SECURITY

[Russia Increasingly Filling Demand for Nuclear Technology](#)

USA Today – 3 June 2007

When Russian President Vladimir Putin stopped in Saudi Arabia earlier this year, he had a sales pitch. During the first trip by a Russian head of state to the Middle East in 80 years, Putin told a meeting of businessmen in February that Russia would be more than happy to provide technology and other assistance to Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations looking to develop nuclear energy.

[A Cool Concept](#)

The Economist – 7 June 2007

GEOTHERMAL heating—using the warmth of the Earth's interior to heat water—is an old idea. Using the planet's natural coolness, though, is something of a novelty. Nevertheless, as cooling and heating are merely two ends of the same process, it could save money and reduce carbon-dioxide emissions. As long, that is, as you can find a suitable source of cold. Fortunately for Toronto, it sits next to a very large supply of the stuff, in the form of Lake Ontario. Canada's largest city has been pioneering the idea that instead of using electricity to power air conditioning, a useful supply of cold can be directly extracted from the environment.

[The Truth About Recycling](#)

The Economist – 7 June 2007

IT IS an awful lot of rubbish. Since 1960 the amount of municipal waste being collected in America has nearly tripled, reaching 245m tonnes in 2005. According to European Union statistics, the amount of municipal waste produced in western Europe increased by 23% between 1995 and 2003, to reach 577kg per person. (So much for the plan to reduce waste per person to 300kg by 2000.) As the volume of waste has increased, so have recycling efforts. In 1980 America recycled only 9.6% of its municipal rubbish; today the

rate stands at 32%. A similar trend can be seen in Europe, where some countries, such as Austria and the Netherlands, now recycle 60% or more of their municipal waste. Britain's recycling rate, at 27%, is low, but it is improving fast, having nearly doubled in the past three years.

MILITARY OPERATION

[US Expands Use of Precision Munitions in Theatres](#)

Janes Defence Weekly – 14 June 2007

US Army and Marine Corps artillery elements continue to expand their use of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) in theatre, with early tactical successes contributing to increased demand and new employment procedures. Unclassified updates on PGM combat employment were detailed during the recent US Army 'Fires Symposium' hosted by the emerging Fires Center of Excellence at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Since its initial introduction into theatre in July 2005, the unitary Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) has been employed about 180 times, including three rounds that accurately struck the intended target but experienced apparent warhead malfunction.

[Soldiers Need More Non-Lethal Weapons, Better Knock Down Power](#)

National Defense Magazine – June 2007

Troops in Iraq and Afghanistan would like to see non-lethal alternatives to conventional ammunition, said Lt. Col. Al Kelly, commander of the 17th Infantry Brigade. Non-lethal weapons are needed for crowd control and mob situations, he said. If a tank drives into a town and stops and crowds of children run up and start throwing rocks because they were told to, soldiers don't want to use live fire, Kelly told a National Defense Industrial Association conference.

[Future Combat Vehicles Will Fall Short of Preferred Weight](#)

National Defense Magazine – June 2007

“Future Combat Systems 20-ton cannon in 2008: fact or fiction?” an artillery officer asked in a 2003 military journal. The answer four years later is “fiction.” Officials working on the Army modernization program admitted that they will not reach the preferred weight for the FCS family of combat vehicles.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[Iran Goes Secret Again](#)

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – 14 June 2007

The world focuses on Iran's illegal uranium enrichment activities, but pays too little attention to Iran's refusal to provide transparency to prove that its nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes. Indeed, Iran recently has become even more secretive, despite insisting that all of its nuclear activities are peaceful. Even though the International Atomic Energy Agency will try to look the other way, it is clear that Iran has committed a troubling new violation of its safeguards agreements.

[Anger Over Secret Nuclear Leaks](#)

Times Magazine – 14 June 2007

A senior U.S. official had to be pulled out of a White House meeting to hear the bad news: highly classified e-mail dealing with the composition of America's atomic weapons had illegally been sent via non-secured networks to members of the board of Los Alamos National Security, LLC (LANS), the company that manages America's nuclear lab in New Mexico. After it was discovered, the fact that the message had passed electronically from person to person without safeguards was quickly designated an "IMI-1" violation, the most serious breach of U.S. national security. LANS could face financial penalties if found responsible for the violation.

[Hope Rise for End to North Korea Impasse After Funds Transfer](#)

Space War – 14 June 2007

Officials in Macau confirmed Thursday the transfer of more than 20 million dollars in North Korean assets from one of the territory's banks, paving the way for Pyongyang to honour its pledge to disarm. Macau finance minister Francis Tam Pak Yuen "confirmed that Banco Delta Asia has, according to the instruction of its North Korean client, transferred more than 20 million dollars out of Macau," a government statement said.