



# **RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE 11/2008**

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**23 May 2008**

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Articles from subscriber only sites are available on request. Révolutionnaire is edited by Samuel Chan, with contributions from Bernard Loo and Joshua Ho. The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) is a key research component of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). It focuses on security research to serve national needs. IDSS' faculty and research staff conduct both academic and policy-oriented research on security-related issues and developments affecting Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific. Its research agenda presently comprises the following programmes: Maritime Security, the Revolution in Military Affairs, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Contemporary Islam, Indonesia and China.

## CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

### [Cabinet condemns Hezbollah 'coup'](#)

BBC – 9 May 2008

Lebanon's cabinet has said the seizure of most of western Beirut by the Shia group Hezbollah was "a bloody coup". The Western-backed governing coalition said it was aimed at increasing Iran's influence and restoring that of Syria. At least 15 people have been killed in three days of clashes between government and opposition supporters. Fighting died down later on Friday. Washington restated its backing for the government, saying that Hezbollah was killing innocent civilians. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States was committed to helping the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. "We will stand by the Lebanese government and peaceful citizens of Lebanon through this crisis and provide the support they need to weather this storm," she said in a statement. The gunmen, who also back Hezbollah's Shia opposition allies, have forced the closure of pro-government media. The opposition has said Hezbollah and its allies will maintain roadblocks around Beirut until there is a solution to the political crisis. But the Lebanese army is now also on the streets protecting Saad Hariri, a Sunni leader of the governing coalition, and other leading figures who support the cabinet. The fighting was sparked by a government move on Monday to shut down Hezbollah's telecoms network. "The armed and bloody coup which is being implemented aims to return Syria to Lebanon and extend Iran's reach to the Mediterranean," the Lebanese government said in a statement, after holding an emergency session. "Violence will not terrorise us, but it will increase our resolve," it said. Mr Siniora was reportedly holed up with several ministers in his heavily guarded in central Beirut. The Lebanese army did not intervene to stop Hezbollah fighters from seizing large swaths of western Beirut. The UN Security Council has urged the rival parties to stop fighting amid fears of civil war breaking out. Lebanon was plunged into civil war from 1975-90, drawing in Syria and Israel, the two regional powers. Analysts say the key to avoiding such a conflict this time may be the neutrality of the army, and its ability to withstand the sectarian tensions. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whose country long dominated Lebanon, said on Friday that the political crisis there was an "internal matter". Having withdrawn its army from the country in 2005, Syria denies meddling in Lebanon's internal politics. But Damascus has been accused of involvement in the assassination over the past three years of several anti-Syrians, including Rafik Hariri, a former prime minister. Lebanon has been without a president since late 2007, amid deadlock between the ruling coalition and Hezbollah-led opposition over the make-up of the government. Earlier, media offices owned by Saad Hariri were shut after being attacked by militants loyal to Hezbollah. The army moved in after gunmen besieged TV station Future News and partially set fire to the offices of al-Mustaqbal newspaper. Mr Hariri's radio station was also silenced.

### [Sudanese rebels 'reach Khartoum'](#)

BBC – 10 May 2008

Sudanese troops have clashed with rebels from Darfur outside the capital, Khartoum, reports say, prompting an overnight curfew in the city. The rebels announced that their

forces had taken nearby Omdurman and were now fighting in the city, but the government said they had been defeated. Sudan's army had been preparing for a possible attack on the capital after detecting a heavily-armed rebel column. Correspondents say this is the closest the rebels have ever been to Khartoum. A curfew was imposed in Khartoum from 1700 local time (1400 GMT) until 1000 on Sunday, and roads and bridges over the Nile are reported to be closed. The US National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe said the White House was very concerned about the fighting. "We would urge that both sides cease hostilities, whether it is the rebel group or any response from the government. We want to see a calm and order restored." The rebels, from the Justice and Equality Movement (Jem) claimed to have taken the Wadi Saidna air force base about 10 miles north of Khartoum, Omdurman and to have entered the capital. But Sudan's presidential adviser Gazi Salaheddin told the BBC the rebels had now been defeated except for a few groups. Mr Salahddein said Jem had tried to take the capital with the backing of Chad's government. He warned that another contingent of rebel fighters might be on their way across the border. A Jem spokesman denied these reports and said they were still on track with their plan to overthrow the government. The BBC's Amber Henshaw, in Khartoum, says the atmosphere in the city is tense but quieter than during the height of the fighting when artillery fire could be heard. Local people in the area said the fighting had lasted several hours. Some reported power failures and street fighting. A BBC News website reader in Omdurman said the rebels had cut off access to food supplies. "The fighting here is terrible," said Chingnachcook. "They are everywhere. I have smuggled out my laptop and I have managed to hide up in our loft." Asabusaid, in Khartoum said: "Fighter aircraft have been observed taking off from Khartoum and the sound of attack helicopters can be heard in the distance from time to time." Hashimi, also in Khartoum said: "There are several army men on each street and there is lots of fighting. No one is sticking to the curfew and many are at the mosques." Experts say Chad and Sudan are fighting a proxy war using each others rebels to achieve their military objectives. The Jem is one of several rebel groups fighting the government and pro-government Janjaweed militia in the western Darfur region since 2003 over alleged discrimination by the authorities in favour of Arabs. The rebels have been involved in raids on government forces in the area before.

### [Lebanese violence reaches Tripoli](#)

*BBC* – 11 May 2008

Fighting has been reported through the night in the Lebanese city of Tripoli between Hezbollah sympathisers and supporters of the government. Machine-guns and rocket-propelled grenades are being used and people have been fleeing their homes, correspondents say. Three people died in the northern city on Saturday. Meanwhile, an uneasy calm has descended on the capital, Beirut, scene of four days of bloody street battles. More than 30 people died in those clashes between Hezbollah fighters and government supporters. On Saturday, Hezbollah agreed to pull its fighters off the streets of the Muslim western part of the city after the army overturned government measures aimed at curbing the group. Sunni supporters of the Western-backed government have been fighting members of an Alawite sect loyal to Hezbollah in Tripoli, an unnamed security official told AFP news agency. About 7,000 people have fled from the city's Bab

al-Tebbaneh district, which marks the front line, the official said. Earlier, pro-government demonstrators burnt offices of the pro-Syrian Baath Party offices. They stamped on posters of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. They could also be seen throwing furniture and files from the Baath offices and a local opposition politician's office, The Associated Press reports. The confrontation in Beirut eased off after the army offered a face-saving compromise that allowed the government to back down from two controversial decisions. The government had moved to shut down Hezbollah's telecoms network and remove the chief of security at Beirut airport for alleged Hezbollah sympathies. Those decisions triggered a devastating Hezbollah onslaught, the BBC's Jim Muir reports from Beirut. The army has essentially shelved both of them. Managing to retain its unity and the respect of both sides, the army has emerged as the arbiter in the current crisis, our correspondent says. If all goes well, the army initiative should restore calm on the streets and see the international airport reopen. While it does not address the fundamental political deadlock underlying the eruption of violence, it has created a problem-solving mechanism that may help movement in that direction. Our correspondent notes that all parties agree that the army commander, Gen Michel Suleiman, should be Lebanon's next president.

### [Sudan: 200 died in Darfur rebel raid near Khartoum](#)

AP – 14 May 2008

More than 200 people were killed in fighting around Sudan's capital over the weekend, the defense minister announced Tuesday in the first official comment on casualties during the assault by Darfur rebels. Gen. Abdul Rahim Mohammed Hussein told parliament that the attackers sent by the rebel Justice and Equality Movement suffered a crushing defeat, with at least two-thirds of their 180 vehicles destroyed, according to the official SUNA news agency. Sudanese were shocked by the rebel assault on the outskirts of Khartoum, hundreds of miles from their bases in the west. The raid was the closest that Darfur's rebels have gotten to the seat of the government. The defense minister said 93 soldiers and 13 policemen died in the weekend fighting in Khartoum's twin city, Omdurman, along with 30 civilians. He said 90 rebel bodies had been found so far, but more were scattered outside the city. The U.N. Security Council on Tuesday strongly condemned the rebel attack. In a statement, the council urged "restraint by all parties, and in particular warns that no retaliatory action should be taken against civilian populations." The general said his troops had been prepared to fight the rebels far from the city, but he charged that the army's location was revealed by "huge numbers of fifth columnists" from factions trying to undermine the government. The rebels admitted they had been defeated but promised further attacks on the capital unless the government deals with the festering situation in Darfur, where 200,000 people have died in a conflict that began five years ago. "JEM might have lost the Khartoum battle and pulled out in dignity ... but it has not lost the war," the group's deputy chairman, Mahmoud Suleiman, said in a statement given to The Associated Press on Tuesday. Life was gradually returning to normal Tuesday, with banks, shops and markets open for business for the first time since the attack. Checkpoints remained in place, however, as troops searched for any rebels remaining in the city, including their leader, Khalil Ibrahim. The government doubled its bounty for Ibrahim on Tuesday to nearly \$250,000 for anyone contributing to the rebel leader's

arrest. State media reported the reward was 500 million new Sudanese pounds, which is the equivalent of \$246 million, but Bakri Mullah, secretary-general of the External Information Office, explained to the AP that the reward was actually in old Sudanese pounds, or about \$246,000. Sudan re-valued its currency more than a year ago and the new pound is worth 1,000 times the old one. According to witnesses cited by the New York-based Human Rights Watch, at least 100 people had been arrested at checkpoints and in house-to-house searches since the attack, as security forces look for suspected rebels. "Given Khartoum's record of abuse, there is grave cause for concern about the fate of those detained," Georgette Gagnon, the group's Africa director, said in a statement late Monday. In a telephone interview with the AP on Monday, Ibrahim vowed to keep up his offensive, saying he can exhaust the army by fighting it across Africa's largest nation. He said he was in Omdurman with his troops. Ibrahim's movement has emerged as the most effective rebel group in Darfur, where ethnic Africans took up arms against the Arab-dominated government in 2003 to fight discrimination. The conflict has displaced more than 2.5 million people.

### [UN closes Afghan refugee centre](#)

*BBC – 12 May 2008*

The UN has closed its repatriation centre in eastern Afghanistan because of unrest in the city of Jalalabad. The temporary closure comes as aid agencies say it is becoming more difficult to operate in parts of the country as security worsens. More than 60,000 Afghan refugees from neighbouring Pakistan have passed through the UN centre this year. The UN says it decided to close the centre after protests closed the main road from Kabul to the Pakistan border. In one demonstration, locals claimed that US forces had killed three civilians in a military operation. The other protest, Jalalabad, was connected to the killing of a local MP's father and the kidnapping of seven members of his family. The UN High Commission for Refugees is keen to stress that the closure is only a temporary measure. Deteriorating security is partly because of the Taliban insurgency. But as the incident in Jalalabad demonstrates, the violence is often rooted in local disputes. Many Afghans believe that the government in Kabul is weak and has failed to impose law and order in much of the country.

### [Pakistan government set to split](#)

*BBC – 12 May 2008*

One of the main parties in Pakistan has announced it is pulling out of the government, just three months after landmark general elections. Ex-PM Nawaz Sharif says his PML-N is quitting because of differences over the reinstatement of judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf. Mr Sharif wants the judges, who became a focus of opposition to Mr Musharraf, to get all their old powers back. But the biggest party, the PPP, wants limitations on their powers. Both sides were eager to avoid the appearance of a major rift, but analysts called the pull-out a huge set-back that could lead to growing instability. The BBC's Barbara Plett in Islamabad says further cracks in the alliance may give a lease of life to pro-Musharraf parties which were defeated in recent elections. "Our ministers will meet the prime minister tomorrow and will submit their resignations," Mr Sharif told

journalists in Islamabad after meeting party colleagues. However, he indicated that he would support the Pakistan People's Party-led government from the backbenches on an issue-by-issue basis. "We will not become part of any conspiracy to destabilise the democratic process," he said. Mr Sharif also announced that he would run in a by-election next month in the city of Rawalpindi. He said that the coalition had twice failed to meet deadlines to restore the judges sacked by President Musharraf. Reinstating the judges was one of Mr Sharif's key election promises and his condition for joining the coalition. A statement from the PPP called the PML-N move "a pause in the process and not a break in the purpose of restoration of judges". It said ministries vacated by the PML-N would not be filled and hoped the issue could be resolved "amicably and in a spirit of accommodation and mutual trust". The party also said it had no plans to field a candidate against Mr Sharif in the Rawalpindi by-election. The alliance had set Monday as the latest deadline to reinstate the judges, but Mr Sharif and the Pakistan People's Party leader, Asif Zardari, wrapped up talks in London without reaching a deal. The new government had initially promised to restore the senior judges by the end of April. Ten days ago, following earlier talks, Mr Sharif announced that all the senior judges sacked by President Musharraf last year would be reinstated on 12 May. Mr Sharif's party has campaigned for the unconditional reinstatement of the judges. Mr Zardari wants the reinstatement of the judges to be part of a larger package of constitutional amendments which would include reducing their powers. President Musharraf sacked about 60 judges - some sitting in the Supreme Court - in November 2007, after declaring a state of emergency. The Supreme Court had been due to rule on whether his re-election was legal. They had also been due to rule on a controversial amnesty covering Mr Zardari and his wife Benazir Bhutto, who was later assassinated. Monday's news came as the Commonwealth decided to re-admit Pakistan as a member. Pakistan was suspended in November after President Musharraf refused to meet a deadline to lift the state of emergency and resign as army chief.

### [Bush offers help for Lebanon army](#)

*BBC* – 12 May 2008

The US is prepared to help strengthen Lebanon's army so it can disarm Hezbollah, US President George W Bush said in an interview with the BBC. He said the Shia Muslim Hezbollah movement had acted against its own people and was destabilising Lebanon. He made the remarks ahead of a trip to the Middle East later this week. At least 60 people have died in clashes in the capital Beirut and other cities between supporters of the government and the Hezbollah-led opposition. The sectarian violence is the worst since the end of the 15-year civil war in 1990. After heavy fighting in Beirut last week, clashes broke out again in the northern city of Tripoli on Monday. An Arab League delegation trying to mediate an end to the fighting is expected to arrive in Lebanon on Wednesday. The latest violence erupted after the government moved to shut down Hezbollah's telecoms network and remove the chief of security at Beirut's airport for allegedly sympathising with Hezbollah. The military said it would use force - if necessary - to restore order, starting from 0600 (0300GMT) on Tuesday. For the past 16 months, Lebanon has been locked in political stalemate between the ruling coalition and Hezbollah-led opposition over the make-up of the government. The army has emerged as

the only factor preventing a complete collapse, and it is generally agreed that its commander, Gen Michel Suleiman, should be the next president. Lebanon has not had a president since November, when Emile Lahoud stepped down despite parliament failing to agree on his successor. Lebanon was plunged into civil war from 1975-90, drawing in Syria and Israel, the two regional powers.

### [Iranian embassy employees shot in Baghdad](#)

*CNN* – 16 May 2008

Iranian Embassy employees and their driver were shot Thursday in a Baghdad incident that some reports said involved Iraqi troops. An Iraqi Interior Ministry official said five employees of the Iranian Embassy were shot and wounded about 9 p.m. in Baghdad. The official said there had been conflicting reports about the shooting. An Interior Ministry report said unidentified gunmen in northern Baghdad fired on two SUVs carrying the five employees and driver, who were transported to an Iraqi hospital. The Baghdad Operations Command, however, reported that an Iraqi army patrol was shot at and returned fire at the SUVs -- injuring the embassy workers and their driver, according to the official. Meanwhile, Iran's semi-official FARS news agency was reporting that three Iranians and one Iraqi employee of the embassy were injured when shot by "unidentified terrorists." The agency quoted an Iranian Embassy official as saying the group was traveling to visit the graves of two religious leaders when 16 bullets were fired at their vehicle from another vehicle. FARS identified the injured Iranians as Abolfazl Zavvar Mohammadi, Akbar Ghasemi and Majid Jaberi, and said Jaberi was in critical condition at a hospital. Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency was blaming the United States for the attack. "U.S. agents carried out terror attacks on Iranian Embassy staff in Baghdad," a bulletin on IRNA's Web site said. Another message posted eight minutes later read, "Iran holds the U.S. government responsible for terror attacks on Iranian Embassy staff in Baghdad." Col. Jerry O'Hara, a U.S. military spokesman, emphasized that the United States "was in no way involved in this attack." "The U.S. military is not in the business of attacking innocent people and strongly condemns any attack on guests or visitors of any country."

### [FARC commander gives up, calls for dialogue](#)

*CNN* – 19 May 2008

The commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia's Force 47 told reporters in Bogota Monday -- a day after surrendering -- that "the solution is not through war. There must be dialogue." Nelly Avila Moreno, 45, whose nom de guerre was Karina, said she and her longtime male companion made the decision jointly to abandon the FARC group, based in the jungle, at 5 a.m. Sunday. She said pressure from Colombian soldiers had been key to their decision, and she called on her fellow rebels to follow her example. "I invite them to change the sensibility that is among the guerrillas," she said, seated by her companion, who said nothing during the news conference. She also had a message for the Colombian people: "It is important to do something for peace in Colombia, and that need to do something is precisely one of my motivations." After 24 years with the FARC, Karina said she wants to reintegrate with society. "At this moment,

what I am thinking about is reuniting with my family and with all of society," she said. Karina said she had had no contact with the group's leaders for the past two years. During that time, she said, "I was trying to stay alive." She said she knows nothing about the group's leaders, because "everything in the FARC is very compartmentalized." Still, she did hear through the news media about the killing by another member of FARC of Ivan Rios, a member of the group's central high command. "We suffered a very strong blow," she said. She acknowledged that news led her to worry about the possibility that one of her fellow guerrillas might consider doing the same thing to her." A person has a lot of combatants alongside, but you don't know what each one is thinking," she said. Asked about news reports of guerrilla operations she may have participated in, Karina admitted to nothing. "They accuse me of a lot of things I wasn't part of," she said. Asked specifically about the killing of the father of President Alvaro Uribe in 1983, she said she did not know who carried out the act, and added, "I don't have my hands stained in that deed." She said that with her surrender have come new fears about possible retribution from FARC loyalists, who consider her a traitor. Wearing a red sweatshirt and what appeared to be a diamond earring in her left ear, she said she once believed the FARC would rule Colombia. "I once dreamed of that," she said. Gen. Mario Montoya, chief of the army, said two Colombian air force helicopters were sent Sunday to pick up Karina and her companion, who had given authorities their general location. "With this, we have given a confounding strike to the FARC structure," particularly to Front 47, which at this point is practically dismantled," he said. Since the killing of Rios, 45 members of the group have laid down their arms and accepted a government plan for reinstallation into society, he said. "We want to send a message to all members of FARC who persist in the mountains," he said. "To tell them, what Karina has done is the road all the members of FARC should go down. If they don't, we are going to continue combating them. Today, more than ever, I invite them to lay down their arms, take the plan. We don't want them dead. We want them alive."

### ['Deal agreed' on Lebanon crisis](#)

*BBC* – 21 May 2008

A deal has been reached aimed at ending the political crisis in Lebanon, officials at talks in Qatar say. Arab mediators have been engaged in five days of talks to try to reconcile the Western-backed Lebanese government and the Hezbollah-led opposition. Lebanon's deep political divisions have led to an 18-month crisis that has come close to sparking a new civil war. The resulting deadlock in parliament has left Lebanon without a president since November. The breakthrough came after both sides agreed on an electoral law for parliamentary elections next year and on a power-sharing cabinet that would allow a new president to be elected, delegates to the talks said. Opposition MP Ali Hasan Khalil said he expected a parliamentary vote to elect a president on Thursday or Friday. The rival groups had agreed last year on electing army chief Gen Michel Suleiman to succeed outgoing pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud, but disagreement over the other issues delayed the vote. Lebanon has been in political crisis since late 2006 when the Hezbollah-led opposition left a national unity coalition cabinet, demanding more power and a veto over government decisions. The crisis exploded into street battles between armed supporters of the factions this month that left at least 65 people dead. Government

attempts to outlaw Hezbollah's private telephone network and reassign Beirut airport's security chief triggered the worst violence since Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war.

### [Fighting in Sudan town raises civil war fears](#)

*CNN* – 21 May 2008

Fighting resumed Tuesday in a disputed oil-rich town in Sudan, threatening to reignite a calamitous civil war which ended three years ago. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon deplored the fighting between the Sudanese military and troops with the Sudan People's Liberation Army. The SPLA fought a rebellion against the government for more than 20 years until both sides signed a peace deal in 2005. The deal's Comprehensive Peace Agreement ended a north-south civil war that killed about 2 million people and displaced more than 4 million others. An impasse over the boundaries of the town of Abyei is a major reason the peace agreement has not been fully implemented. Fighting erupted in Abyei on May 13. It resumed Tuesday despite a cease-fire and has "resulted in the destruction" of the town "and the displacement of between 30,000 and 50,000 people," the secretary general said in a statement. "If the situation is not urgently addressed, the achievements thus far of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement could be placed at serious risk," he said. The civil war in Sudan, which started in 1983, pitted a northern government dominated by Arab Muslims against black Christians and animists in southern Sudan. That conflict was not directly related to ongoing violence in the Darfur region of western Sudan. Human rights groups and United Nations say the Sudanese military armed and trained Arab militias in Darfur after a rebellion erupted in 2003. They say the military and militias have engaged in widespread killing, rape and forced displacements in Darfur as they battle about rebels who have splintered into roughly a dozen groups. One of those groups staged a daring attack this month near the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. The government said it quashed the attack. Nearly 300,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million displaced in Darfur in the last five years, the UN says.

## **TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM**

### [Serial bomb blasts leave 60 dead in India](#)

*CNN* – 13 May 2008

India is on high alert after a series of near-simultaneous explosions killed at least 60 people and wounded 150 others in a top tourist spot, government and local officials told CNN-IBN. Bicycles and rickshaws were strewn about the streets, with pools of blood nearby, in the northwestern city of Jaipur. Motorcycles, pieces of which were found at nearly every bomb site, appear to have been used in the attacks, said Rajasthan Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Indian government officials -- including Minister of State for Home Affairs Shriprakash Jaiswal -- were quick to label it a terrorist attack. The seven explosions started at about 7:30 p.m. (1400 GMT) and detonated within 12 minutes of each other, police said. The bombs exploded within about 500 meters (0.3 mile) of each other in Jaipur's old city, which is frequented by tourists. An eighth bomb was defused, according to H.G.

Raghavendra, a Jaipur city official. He described all the bombs as "medium intensity." "There is no reason to panic," he told CNN-IBN. "Everything is under control." One blast struck near Hanuman Temple, which was crowded with Hindus worshipping Hanuman, the religion's monkey god. Another struck near a market area inside Jaipur's walled city where tourists and locals frequent restaurants and shops. Jaipur, known as the "pink city," is about 260 kilometers (160 miles) southwest of India's capital, New Delhi. Many of the casualties were taken to SMS Hospital, the largest government hospital in Jaipur. People gathered outside the hospital to hear news about friends and relatives; the hospital issued an urgent appeal for blood donations. The state of Rajasthan, where Jaipur is located, was placed on alert, local officials said. Delhi police officials said they too were on high alert after the blasts and were receiving regular updates from Jaipur on developments in the investigation. The Deputy Chief Minister for the state of Maharashtra, R.R. Patil, said the entire state was also on high alert. Mumbai is in the state of Maharashtra. The attack was immediately condemned by the United States. U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said the attacks were "quite clearly an act intended to take innocent lives." He told reporters at his daily briefing that Washington was still collecting information, and could not "offer insight into who may be responsible." According to the U.S. State Department, India ranks among the countries where terrorism is most common. "The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, attacks by extreme leftist Naxalites and Maoists in eastern and central India, assaults by ethno-linguistic nationalists in the northeastern states, and terrorist strikes nationwide by Islamic extremists took more than 2,300 lives this year," the agency said. It said India's counterterrorism efforts "are hampered by outdated and overburdened law enforcement and legal systems," and described the country's court system as "slow, laborious, and prone to corruption."

### [Bomb explodes in Spanish police barracks](#)

*Reuters* – 14 May 2008

A car bomb exploded at a police barracks in the Basque Country in northern Spain, wounding 3 people and leaving at least 2 trapped in the rubble of a building. A police rescue team using dogs was searching for the people trapped in the wrecked Civil Guard barracks in the town of Legutiano, where the bomb exploded just before 0100 GMT, a spokeswoman for the Basque Country police said. There was no warning before the attack, which took place in an area that is often the target of Basque separatists. No one has claimed responsibility, and only one of the trapped victims was showing signs of life, police said. The Basque separatist group ETA has killed more than 800 people in four decades of violent struggle for independence for the Basque Country, which lies in northern Spain and southwestern France. ETA's last fatal victim was a former small town politician for Spain's governing Socialist Party, gunned down just before a national election in March, police said.

### [Bin Laden urges Muslims to liberate Palestine](#)

*CNN* – 16 May 2008

Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden -- in a blunt new message that coincides with Israel's 60th anniversary -- urged his followers -- to liberate Palestine, a terrorism analyst told CNN

on Friday. In a message titled "The Causes of Conflict on the 60th Anniversary of the State of Israeli Occupation," bin Laden reiterated jihadist opposition to the existence of the Jewish state and its policies. Bin Laden's audio message, released Thursday, told listeners that "liberating" Palestine should be the aim of every Muslim, according to terrorism analyst Laura Mansfield. The message, played over a still image on jihadist Web sites, runs 9 minutes and 40 seconds. CNN cannot independently verify the authenticity of the message. Bin Laden decries characterization of Palestinian militant groups as terror organizations. He also says Israel has engaged in terror. "As your low values show double standards in one issue, you call the Palestinian organizations terror organizations. They were punished and ignored. "On the other hand, the Israelis were killing civilians from women and children, either through car bombs as in Haifa and elsewhere. Or what is worse than that, when the Zionist organizations massacred Palestinian villagers by scaring them, deporting them, and robbing their lands, what was your stance?" He singles out Menachem Begin, the late Israeli prime minister, and blames him for the events at Deir Yassin, a Palestinian Arab village where the killings of civilians occurred in 1948. "What was the Westerner's stance on this? Instead of being punished for those crimes, he was appointed prime minister. That wasn't enough for them; they presented him with the Nobel Peace Prize," he said. Today, bin Laden says, "we are living the massacre of Gaza," the Palestinian-controlled territory. Israeli troops and Palestinian militants from Gaza have been fighting and Israeli security moves have had severe humanitarian consequences. It is happening in front of the eyes of the world. One and a half million individuals under the deadly bombing are dying slowly because of poor nutrition and scarcity of medicine," bin Laden said. "But your politicians require Egypt's ruler to provision the embargo on them to choke the weak and most of them are women and children." Bin Laden emphasizes the fighting will continue against "the Israelis and their allies, to obtain justice, to be fair to the ones mistreated." "We will not abandon one inch of Palestine, God willing, if there is one honest Muslim man left in this world," bin Laden said. Bin Laden's last message came on March 20, when in an audiotape he called Iraq "the perfect base to set up the jihad to liberate Palestine." In an audiotape released the previous day, bin Laden condemned European countries for siding with the United States in Afghanistan and for allowing the publication of cartoons considered insulting to Islam's prophet Mohammed. Al Qaeda -- which is responsible for the September 11, 2001, attack on the United States -- regularly condemns Zionism, the philosophical underpinning of Israel. President Bush referred to al Qaeda on Friday in an address to Israel's parliament, the Knesset, in Jerusalem. He decried the actions and the motivations of terrorists and noted that bin Laden teaches that "the killing of Jews and Americans is one of the biggest duties."

### [Aid vessel hijacked off Somalia](#)

*BBC* – 18 May 2008

East African maritime officials say pirates have hijacked a Jordanian ship off the coast of Somalia. The *Victoria*, sailing from India with 4,000 tonnes of sugar donated by Denmark on board, was seized early on Saturday as it neared Mogadishu. It has a crew of 12 from Pakistan, India, Tanzania and Bangladesh. The seas off Somalia have some of the highest rates of piracy in the world, with a dozen vessels attacked this year, and three

in recent weeks. Last month the United States and France proposed a UN resolution allowing countries to chase and arrest pirates in Somalia's territorial waters. Contact with the Jordanian-registered *Victoria* was lost at 0500GMT when the boat was 55km (35 miles) off the Somali coast, Jordanian Transport Minister Alaa al-Batayneh said. The boat is now reportedly heading north. He said Jordan was working with the Danish embassy in Mogadishu to try to secure the release of the ship and crew. Somali officials have blamed Western companies for paying ransoms after hijackings, saying this only worsens the problem. In April, the 26 crew of a Spanish fishing boat were released after being seized by pirates, and a reported ransom of \$1.2m (£600,000) was paid.

### [Basque ETA leader arrested in France](#)

*CNN* – 20 May 2008

The leader of the Basque separatist group ETA, Francisco Javier Lopez Pena, aka "Thierry," was arrested Tuesday in southern France, Spanish police said. Spanish Civil Guards and French police arrested him and three other members of ETA outside the city of Bordeaux, security sources told CNN Plus, CNN's sister network. The others arrested were identified as Ainhoa Ozaeta Mendiondo, Igor Suberbiola and Jon Salaberria. The Interior Ministry considers Lopez Pena, ETA's military leader and politician, a suspect in the December 2006 Madrid airport bombing, which killed two people and led government officials to end a ceasefire. The separatist group had promised that its ceasefire would be permanent, raising hopes for an end to nearly 40 years of ETA violence blamed for more than 800 deaths and thousands of injuries. ETA wants an independent Basque homeland. ETA has traditionally used southern France, just north of Spain's Basque region, as a rear-guard logistics base. But in recent years, increased French and Spanish police cooperation has made it more difficult for ETA operatives in France. There are about 500 ETA convicts or suspects in Spanish jails and more than 100 more in French jails, authorities have told CNN.

### ['Highest Eta commander' arrested](#)

*BBC* – 21 May 2008

The most senior commander of the Basque separatist movement, Eta, has been arrested in a joint Spanish-French operation, Spanish authorities say. Javier Lopez Pena - alias "Thierry" - was seized with three other Eta suspects in a late-night raid in the city of Bordeaux, in south-west France. Eta is blamed for the deaths of more than 820 people in its 40-year campaign for an independent Basque nation. The group announced a ceasefire in 2006 but formally ended it last June. Spain's Interior Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba hailed the arrest. He said Mr Lopez Pena was "in all probability, the person who carried the most weight within Eta - politically and militarily". Eta said it carried out Monday's powerful car bomb attack in Bilbao, the economic capital of Spain's Basque region. The attack did considerable damage to buildings but did not cause any injuries. It came on the eve of a meeting between Spain's Prime Minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, and the premier of the Basque region, Juan Jose Ibarretxe, in which Mr Zapatero again rejected a Basque sovereignty plan. Eta has also been blamed for a bomb attack on 14 May that killed one policeman and injured four other people outside a police barracks in

Legutiano, near the Basque regional capital Vitoria. The other three people arrested were named as Ainhoa Ozaeta Mendiondo, Igor Suberbiola and Jon Salaberria. Police also seized hand-guns and a computer in the raid. On the run for more than two decades, Mr Lopez Pena is believed to have assumed command of Eta in 2006, while the group was on a ceasefire. He engaged in ultimately unsuccessful talks with the Spanish government, and is believed to have been closely involved in the decision to abandon the ceasefire. He is alleged to have ordered the December 2006 bombing of Madrid's airport - which ended the ceasefire and killed two people. Spanish media said Ms Ozaeta was the masked woman who made the official announcement ending the ceasefire in a June 2007 Eta video. Mr Salaberria is an ex-regional legislator of the banned Eta political wing Batasuna.

## **DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY**

### [Pakistan opposes US military aide](#)

*BBC – 9 May 2008*

Pakistan says it has asked the United States not to appoint the former head of the US prison at Guantanamo as military envoy in Islamabad. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said his government had "genuine reservations" over the appointment of Maj-Gen Jay Hood. Washington has already cancelled the posting, The New York Times reports. No formal announcement has been made. Correspondents say the appointment would have provoked uproar in Pakistan. Hundreds of Muslim prisoners, many from Pakistan, have been held at Guantanamo without charge since the prison was set up following the 11 September, 2001 attacks on the US. Pakistan's foreign minister said his government wanted Washington to respect its concerns over Gen Hood's proposed assignment. "We are allies and partners and we understand, and we should understand, each other's needs," Mr Qureshi told the Senate, parliament's upper house, on Friday. "If... our request is not entertained then we have options not to allow Hood and people sharing his thinking inside Pakistani territory." On Thursday a spokesman for Pakistan's foreign office said the US would take a decision on the posting bearing in mind Pakistani "sentiments and sensitivities". Maj-Gen Hood would have become the most senior US officer in Pakistan, a key ally in the US-led "war on terror". His appointment was announced in March. "It reflected the military's aim to put a crisis-tested veteran in a critical job at a pivotal time in the fight against al-Qaeda and the Taleban in Pakistan's tribal areas," the New York Times reported. The paper quoted a US Central Command spokesman as saying Gen Hood was now being considered for "a different, equally important job" at command headquarters. During Gen Hood's command at Guantanamo between 2004 and 2006 detainees on hunger strike were force-fed with tubes. Brig Gen Jay Hood admitted in 2005 that there had been a number of incidents involving Guantanamo guards showing "mishandling" the Koran. In recent weeks, a number of reports in the Pakistani media have been highly critical of Gen Hood's proposed posting.

Moscow echoes with nostalgia as military parades through Red Square

*IHT* – 9 May 2008

Nuclear missile launchers and columns of tanks rolled through Red Square on Friday in a display of martial hardware not seen in front of the Kremlin since the Soviet Union's waning days. The parade, smaller in scale than similar commemorations in the Soviet period but laden with significance and mixed messages, marked the 63rd anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany, which is observed in Russia as Victory Day, a solemn state holiday. It was intended both as a tribute to the dwindling ranks of surviving veterans and as a display of Russia's efforts to revive armed forces left moribund by the Soviet Union's collapse. It was also widely described as a sign that the Kremlin wanted to show the world that it has recovered from the embarrassments of the 1990s, and that its foreign policy had not softened in a transfer of presidential power this week. But the goose-stepping footfalls, echoing in front of shop windows bearing products from Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior, captured as well the contrasts institutionalized during eight years of rule by former President Vladimir Putin, the former spymaster who left office Wednesday and returned to power as prime minister the following day. Confident and flush with wealth, Putin's Russia is led by men who embrace Soviet symbols while promising tax breaks and legislation to encourage a massive Russian investor class. The new president, Dmitri Medvedev, a lawyer who has spoken of nurturing civil liberties and a climate more conducive to small business and personal investors, but who ascended to office in an election stage-managed by the Kremlin, reviewed the passing columns. Putin, his mentor, stood behind him as he addressed the crowd. When the troops began to pass by, saluting the dignitaries, he stepped forward to his protégé's side to review the troops. In a sign that the Kremlin had not yet settled how to interpret the seven decades of Soviet history, Lenin's Mausoleum was temporarily blocked from view by a huge mural of Russia's tricolored national flag. The mausoleum, where Lenin's embalmed body still lies in state, is normally a centerpiece of the square and perhaps Moscow's most potent Soviet symbol. The president and prime minister stood on a reviewing stand erected temporarily for the event, their backs to Lenin's remains as they presided over a ritual created by Stalin. Medvedev thanked the aging veterans in attendance - white-haired men and woman in their eighties and nineties, many wearing blazers heavy with medals. Then he spoke of readiness and restraint. "History of world wars warns that armed conflicts do not erupt on their own," he said. "They are fueled by those whose irresponsible ambitions overpower the interests of countries and whole continents, the interests of millions of people." He added, "We need to remember the lessons of that war and work every day so that such tragedies never happen again." The parade was the first display of armor and nuclear missile launchers on Red Square since 1990, and was followed by a flyover of 32 military planes, including strategic bombers. The Kremlin's decision to parade its military hardware was the subject of differing interpretations even before it began, viewed variously as symbolic confirmation of Russia's pride, aggressiveness, a marketing show of Russian arms or a nationalistic festival ordered by Putin, for Putin.

[Afghans meet to restore dialogue](#)

*BBC* – 9 May 2008

Tribal leaders, members of civil society and politicians in Afghanistan have held a meeting to discuss ways of bringing peace to the country. The gathering took place in a tent in the capital, Kabul, on Thursday. It agreed that its representatives would meet members of the Taleban and Hezb-e-Islami groups to lay the ground for peace talks with the government. Afghan and foreign troops have been fighting the Taleban in the volatile south and south-east of Afghanistan. Several thousand representatives attended Thursday's meeting. The meeting in Kabul also agreed that operations by the international forces in Afghanistan had led to people joining the insurgents. It called on Islamic countries to do more to help establish peace and security in Afghanistan.

[Russian fury at NATO 'air attacks'](#)

*CNN* – 10 May 2008

Russia's air force chief has accused NATO fighters escorting Russian bombers on patrol flights over neutral waters of violating safety rules. Col.-Gen. Alexander Zelin said on Saturday that NATO aircraft were approaching Russian bombers too closely and too often, creating risky situations. "They approach our strategic bombers at unacceptable distances and at unacceptable intervals, conduct various maneuvers around them and violate flight safety rules in every way," Zelin was quoted by the Interfax news agency as telling reporters Saturday. No one answered the phone at the Air Force's press service Saturday. An increasingly assertive Moscow is seeking to showcase its military might and clout in the international arena. During Friday's Victory Day parade, Russia displayed tanks and missile launchers on Red Square for the first time since the Soviet era, evoking the Cold War. Russia's military spending has increased eightfold to an annual \$40 billion during the past eight years, thanks to the nation's oil bonanza. Analysts, however, say the armed forces still suffer from the problems that have dented its capability and prestige since the Soviet collapse. Zelin complained that NATO F-15, F-16 and F-22 fighter jets regularly "attack" Russian bombers over the Arctic Ocean. "It is not a misuse of the word 'attack' because our partners are training for combat actions, reaching the point of an attack," Zelin was quoted as saying. "I must confess that this is quite unpleasant and even dangerous. Naturally, we rehearse our counteractions." There was no immediate comment from NATO. Russia itself has been the subject of similar disputes. In February, Russian bombers flew over a U.S. aircraft carrier in the Pacific, prompting the U.S. to scramble fighters to escort the Russian aircraft. In September last year, Russian jets were accused of violating Finnish airspace. Russia said the jets were flying over neutral territory.

[EU condemns Ahmadinejad's 'unacceptable' anti-Israel remarks](#)

*AFP* – 10 May 2008

The EU presidency on Friday condemned 'in the strongest possible terms' anti-Israeli remarks made by Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who called the state of Israel 'a stinking corpse'. Mr Ahmadinejad's comments, delivered on Thursday, 'are

unacceptable, damaging and uncivilised,' the European Union's Slovenian presidency said in a statement. The EU presidency 'condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent statements made by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran... Such statements are improper for representatives of the Iranian authorities,' the statement said. The EU's rotating presidency, held by Slovenia for the first half of this year, called on the Iranian leader 'to stop the hostile rhetoric and refrain from all threats towards other states and nations, members of the international community'. Mr Ahmadinejad was quoted by the official IRNA news agency on Thursday, the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel, as calling it a 'stinking corpse' which is doomed to disappear. 'Those who think they can revive the stinking corpse of the usurping and fake Israeli regime by throwing a birthday party are seriously mistaken,' he said. Iran does not recognise the Jewish state, and since becoming president in 2005 Ahmadinejad has repeatedly provoked international outrage by predicting that Israel is doomed to disappear. He has also caused controversy by playing down the scale of the Holocaust. Israel's President Shimon Peres on Friday claimed the current violence in Lebanon was fomented by Iran to further what he said was Teheran's goal to control the Middle East.

### [Sudan says it has cut diplomatic ties with Chad](#)

*Reuters* – 11 May 2008

Sudan broke off diplomatic relations with Chad on Sunday after an attack by Darfur rebels on the capital Khartoum that the government said was supported by Chadian President Idriss Deby. "We are now cutting our diplomatic relations with this regime," President Omar Hassan al-Bashir said on state television.

### [Putin rewards loyalists in new government](#)

*CNN* – 12 May 2008

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin wasted no time in naming his new Cabinet on Monday, bringing in loyalists from the Kremlin in what was seen as an effort to shift the center of power to his new place of work. He also left several prominent ministers untouched, including Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov and Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin. Putin announced the 24 positions, eight of them new, at a Cabinet meeting in the government headquarters, the ministers already seated according to their new appointments. President Dmitry Medvedev, Putin's hand-picked successor who was inaugurated last week, quickly approved the appointments, which included the demotion of a former rival. Putin named the hawkish Sergei Ivanov, once seen as a top candidate to succeed him as president, as one of his deputy prime ministers, a step down from his previous position as first deputy premier. The new prime minister increased the number of deputies to seven, compared to the five that served his predecessor, Viktor Zubkov. Zubkov, who headed the government for eight months and was widely seen as a transitional figure, was named a first deputy prime minister. He was put in charge of agriculture, forestry and the fishing industry, in addition to customs and tariffs. The other first deputy premier is Igor Shuvalov, a top policy aide in Putin's Kremlin who attained prominence as an important figure when Russia hosted the Group of Eight summit in 2006. Shuvalov will oversee foreign economic policy and negotiate

Russia's membership in the World Trade Organization. Igor Sechin, the powerful former deputy chief of presidential staff, will oversee industrial development programs. Sechin, who is widely seen as a leader of a powerful Kremlin clan of "siloviki," or veterans of Russian security services, will apparently remain chairman of the state-controlled oil company Rosneft. Political analyst Dmitry Oreshkin said most of the promotions were given to colorless officials who are little known by the general public. "There was no populism in the new appointments," he said. "The role of public opinion is so low that whomever is appointed will be accepted." The most striking change was the dismissal of Nikolai Patrushev, the head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), who was given a new post as head of the presidential Security Council. He was replaced by one of his former deputies, Alexander Bortnikov, who had headed the KGB successor agency's economic security division. Mikhail Grishankov, a former FSB officer who is now a lawmaker, predicted that Patrushev's appointment will make the Security Council more influential. "Patrushev's appointment will increase this organ's role," Grishankov said, according to RIA Novosti news agency. But political analyst Andrei Soldatov said Bortnikov's appointment is a Kremlin effort to rein in the security agency, which under Putin had regained much of its former clout. "Bortnikov is Medvedev's man, and his appointment seems to be an attempt to put the security structures under the thumb of Kremlin insiders with strictly economic interests," Soldatov said. The corruption-tainted telecommunications minister, Leonid Reiman, was not reappointed.

### [Russia Ready to Organize Meeting between Azerbaijani, Armenian Presidents – Speaker](#)

*Trend News* – 13 May 2008

Russia is ready to organize a meeting between the Azerbaijani and Armenian Presidents to continue peaceful negotiations on settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. "There are good opportunities for a meeting between the conflicting sides' presidents. Russia offers its assistance to organize the meeting," Boris Grizlov, Speaker of the Russian Parliament, said in Baku on 13 May during the meeting with the chairman of the Azerbaijani Parliament Ogtay Asadov. "Moscow will support any decision of the sides regarding the conflict," Grizlov said. The Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia are expected to meet in St Petersburg in June within the framework of the Economic Forum to take place from 6 to 7 June. "The agreement in this connection was achieved between the two countries' Foreign Ministers during CE Ministerial Committee's meeting in Strasburg on 6 May," Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov said to journalists on 12 May. That will be the first meeting between Ilham Aliyev and the newly elected Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, who was elected in February. "At the meeting with new Armenian authorities it will become clear how much they are ready for peaceful negotiations," he said. During the upcoming meeting the Presidents are expected to discuss written suggestions on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which were presented by the OSCE Minsk Group's co-chairs to Azerbaijani and Armenian Foreign Ministers in Madrid on 29 November 2007. The core of the suggestions is kept in secret due to confidentiality of the negotiation process. So far, OSCE Minsk Group's co-chairs presented three suggestions to the conflicting countries, with two of them rejected by Armenia. And Baku rejected co-chairs' suggestion to establish a confederative state with

Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict between the two countries of the South Caucasus began in 1988 due to Armenian territorial claims against Azerbaijan. Since 1992, Armenian Armed Forces have occupied 20% of Azerbaijan including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and its seven surrounding districts. In 1994, Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a ceasefire agreement at which time the active hostilities ended. The Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group ( Russia, France, and the US) are currently holding peaceful negotiations.

### [Iran the 'single biggest threat' to Mid-east peace: Bush](#)

*AFP* – 13 May 2008

US President George W. Bush on Monday called Iran the 'single biggest threat' to peace in the Middle East ahead of a visit to the region centred on celebrations of Israel's 60th anniversary.

'To me it's the single biggest threat to peace in the Middle East, the Iranian regime,' because of its nuclear programme and its support of groups like the Lebanese Hizbollah militia, Mr Bush told Israel's Channel 10. 'Their funding of Hizbollah - look what's happening in Lebanon now, a young democracy trying to survive,' Mr Bush said in excerpts of an interview to be broadcast in its entirety on Tuesday. In recent days Lebanon has been driven to the brink of civil war after days of deadly sectarian street clashes between the Shiite Hizbollah and its allies and Sunni Muslim supporters of the US-backed government. 'By the way it's in Israel's interest that the Lebanese democracy survives. You need to be concerned about Iran and you are concerned about Iran and so are we,' Mr Bush said. The US and Israel accuse Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons and Israel has considered the Islamic republic its greatest strategic threat in the wake of repeated statements by its president predicting the Jewish state's demise. Iran insists its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful. Mr Bush was due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Wednesday at the start of a five-day trip anchored on Israel's 60th anniversary celebrations and aimed at bolstering US-backed Middle East peace talks launched in November. Mr Bush declined to comment on a major corruption investigation recently launched against the beleaguered Israeli premier, saying only that he has 'great relations with the prime minister.' 'I find him to be a frank man and an honest man and an open man,' Mr Bush said. Mr Olmert is suspected of having received funds illegally from a US businessman before he became premier in 2006.

### [US 'violated Venezuela airspace'](#)

*BBC* – 19 May 2008

Venezuela has demanded an explanation from Washington after a US military aircraft violated its airspace. The US ambassador in Venezuela's capital, Caracas, has been summoned to explain Saturday's event. US officials admitted a naval plane on a counter-narcotics mission had "navigational problems" that led it to briefly enter Venezuelan airspace. Tension has been rising in the region with both the US and Colombia accusing Caracas of financing Colombian rebels. Venezuelan Defence Minister Gustavo Rangel said the US jet had been tracked by his country's air defences over the Venezuelan-owned island of La Orchila on Saturday. Mr Rangel told a news conference that the US aircraft "practically flew over" La Orchila - where Venezuela has a military base and President

Hugo Chavez has a residence - and another island before turning back. "This is just the latest step in a series of provocations," he said. US officials admitted the incident later on Monday. "Support of Venezuelan air traffic control was greatly appreciated as they rendered assistance in guiding the US aircraft to international airspace, the US Joint Interagency Task Force South said in a statement. "A US S-3 aircraft conducting counter-drugs operations lost navigational situational awareness causing it to fly into Venezuelan airspace off the mainland coast," the statement added. The Florida-based task force conducts counter-narcotics operations in the Caribbean. The S-3 is a reconnaissance aircraft. The BBC's James Ingham in Caracas says it comes at a time of increased tension in the region, with both the US and Colombia accusing Venezuela of financing the left-wing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc). Colombia says various documents prove that Venezuela has funded the rebels. Mr Chavez insists he has never provided any support. The US violation of Venezuelan airspace comes two days after a similar claim was made against Colombia. The Bogota government denied that its troops had crossed into Venezuelan territory on Friday. Our correspondent says the latest row will further increase tension between Venezuela and two countries it clearly sees as enemies.

[Gates: U.S. 'stuck' in Guantanamo](#)

CNN – 20 May 2008

Efforts to close the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, are at "a standstill," Defense Secretary Robert Gates told a Senate subcommittee Tuesday. "The brutally frank answer is that we're stuck, and we're stuck in several ways," Gates told the defense subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Human rights groups have long called for the facility to be closed, alleging that detainees endure numerous human rights violations amounting to torture. CIA chief Michael Hayden admitted this year that the agency had used waterboarding, a controversial technique that simulates drowning, on three Guantanamo detainees. Gates said that he favors closing the detention center, which currently holds about 270 detainees, but that a number of problems stand in the way. For one, Gates said, there are about 70 detainees ready for release whose home governments either will not accept them or may free them after they return. He referred to former Guantanamo detainee Abdullah Saleh al-Ajmi, who killed himself in a suicide attack last month in Mosul, Iraq, after being released from Guantanamo in 2005. Al-Ajmi was not the first former detainee reported to have returned to the battlefield after leaving Guantanamo. Pentagon officials say that more than 10 people have been killed or captured in fighting after being released from the detention facility. Gates said there were also several detainees who cannot be freed but who are also ineligible for prosecution under the military courts set up by the Bush administration. Gates did not elaborate on why those detainees would not be charged. "What do you do with that irreducible 70 or 80, or whatever the number is, who you cannot let loose but will not be charged and will not be sent home?" Gates asked. Furthermore, he said, there are lots of obstacles to overcome in order to send the detainees to U.S. prisons. "We have a serious 'not in my backyard' problem. I haven't found anybody who wants these terrorists to be placed in a prison in their home state," he said. Last week, a lawyer for several Guantanamo detainees said that a judge's decision could further delay efforts to try al Qaeda figures

held at Guantanamo Bay. A military judge ordered Brig. Gen. Thomas Hartmann, a Pentagon lawyer, to stay out of the case of Salim Ahmed Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's former driver and bodyguard, after ruling that he exerted improper influence on prosecutors trying the case. Defense attorney Charles Swift said the ruling is likely to stall the case against Hamdan and other al Qaeda figures being tried in the Bush administration's military courts. The Bush administration insists that it does not torture suspected terrorists during interrogations. The president said that top al Qaeda suspects had been subjected to "tough" but legal interrogation methods in prisons overseas.

### [Israel-Syria confirm peace talks](#)

*BBC* – 21 May 2008

Israel and Syria have said they are holding indirect talks to reach a comprehensive peace agreement. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's office said both sides were talking "in good faith and openly". The Syrian foreign ministry also confirmed the Turkish-mediated talks, the first since 2000. The last round of negotiations broke down because of disagreement over the extent of Israel's possible withdrawal from the Golan Heights. "The two sides indicated they want to lead these negotiations in a serious spirit so as to achieve complete peace," said spokesman Mark Regev. In a statement, Syria's foreign ministry said: "Both sides have expressed their desire to conduct the talks in goodwill and decided to continue dialogue with seriousness to achieve comprehensive peace." In April, it was reported that Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was mediating in talks between the two sides, who are still technically at war over the Golan Heights, which Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war. The Syrian foreign minister, Walid Muallem, has said Israel has now agreed to withdraw from the Golan up to the armistice line of 1967. Israel has refused to comment on the claim, but a spokesman for Mr Olmert said the current talks were being carried out with the failure of the previous ones in mind, and that they had recently gathered momentum. Analysts say that, in return for any withdrawal, Israel would demand Syria sever its ties with Iran and the Hezbollah group in Lebanon. However, they add that withdrawal from the Golan would not be popular with Israelis. The reports in April of talks sparked outrage in the Israeli parliament, where several MPs said they would try to accelerate the passage of a bill requiring any withdrawal from the Golan to be dependent on a referendum. Mr Olmert is currently battling corruption allegations, and the BBC's Katya Adler in Jerusalem says the prime minister's critics believe the confirmation of peace talks may be an attempt to divert some attention from that.

## **DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY**

### [US defends arms sales to Taiwan, criticises Chinese missile buildup](#)

*AFP* – 16 May 2008

The United States criticised on Thursday China's missile buildup along the Taiwan Strait and said Washington would continue to sell arms to Taiwan to bolster its defence needs. Deputy Secretary of State John Negoponte said Washington had expressed concern to

Beijing about its ongoing military buildup on its side of the strait separating the mainland and the Taiwan island. 'We view China's buildup as unnecessary and counterproductive,' he told a congressional hearing. 'The anxiety it breeds on Taiwan encourages pro-independence inclinations that the mainland's missile deployment purports to deter,' he said. Outgoing, independence-leaning Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian warned recently that China had increased the number of tactical ballistic missiles targeting the island from 200 in 2000 to more than 1,300 now. Beijing has repeatedly warned of an invasion should Taiwan declare formal independence. Taiwan and China split in 1949 at the end of a civil war, although Beijing regards the self-ruling island as part of its territory awaiting reunification - by force if necessary. Mr Negroponte said Washington would 'continue to sell Taiwan defensive arms to maintain the capacity to assist in Taiwan's defence if needed.' The United States is obliged by law to offer Taiwan a means of self-defence if its security is threatened and is the leading arms supplier to the island despite switching diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. Aside from the legal obligation, Negroponte said the arms sales also 'supports our belief that a Taiwan confident and capable of protecting itself will offer the best prospects for a peaceful resolution of cross-Strait differences.' Mr Negroponte also chided Beijing for its 'efforts to squeeze Taiwan's diplomatic space,' calling them also counterproductive. He made clear that the United States did not support Taiwan independence and was against Taiwan's membership in international organisations where sovereignty was a requirement. But the United States, which maintains a one-China policy hinged on diplomatic relations with Beijing only, wanted to find ways to allow Taiwan to 'participate meaningfully' in the broad range of international activities, he said. For example, he said, Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organisation would give it access to vital health information about quickly spreading infectious diseases. 'That is in everyone's interests,' he said. Taiwan has said that it expected the United States to lead a push for observer status for the island despite China's persistent opposition at the May 19-24 annual meeting of the World Health Assembly, the highest decision-making body of the World Health Organisation. Mr Chen's successor, Mr Ma Ying-jeou, who officially takes over next week, has vowed to improve relations with China, increase trade, tourism and transport links, and work on a peace treaty to end hostilities. China-Taiwan political ties deteriorated during the past eight years under the Chen' rule as he had irked Washington and Beijing with his pro-independence stance. 'With the inauguration of Ma Ying-jeou on May 20 we will have safely navigated a tense period in cross-Strait relations,' Mr Negroponte said. 'We want cross-Strait differences to be resolved peacefully and according to the wishes of the people on both sides of the Strait. Nobody should question our resolve in insisting on such a peaceful process,' he said.

### [Every \\$10 oil rise ups Air Force costs \\$610 million](#)

*Reuters* – 22 May 2008

The U.S. Air Force operates the "world's largest airline" and every \$10-per-barrel increase in crude oil boosts its annual operating costs by \$610 million, Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne said on Thursday. The Air Force's bill for aviation fuel was about \$6 billion in fiscal 2007, Wynne told a defense industry group. He declined to predict what the total would be for 2008. U.S. crude oil futures soared to a record above

\$135 a barrel on Wednesday, more than double the price of one year ago. "We are very concerned about the instability in oil prices because it wreaks havoc on how we manage our flying-hour program across the Air Force, just as it is wreaking havoc on the pricing statistics for an airline," Wynne said. The jump in fuel prices has hammered the U.S. commercial airline industry, forcing seven small carriers to file for bankruptcy or to close their doors in the past five months. The Air Force spent just over \$6 billion on fuel costs in fiscal 2006, more than double its costs in fiscal 2001, before the start of the war in Afghanistan. The Air Force, which has 19,000 pilots operating 5,700 aircraft and also flies unmanned aircrafts, has launched an ambitious drive to reduce its carbon dioxide output and reduce its reliance on foreign oil. The House of Representatives adopted an amendment on Thursday evening as part of a \$601.4 billion defense spending bill that would require the Pentagon to include greenhouse gas emissions as one of many criteria for buying new weapons.

## **NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY**

### [Famine fears for North Korea, aid group warns](#)

*CNN* – 9 May 2008

North Koreans are dying because of food shortages in rural areas, and a massive famine is just a matter of time, a South Korean aid group said Friday. The food situation was as bad as the famine that hit the country in the mid-1990s, which left as many as 2 million people dead, Seoul-based Good Friends -- a Buddhist-affiliated group that sends food and other aid to the North -- cited an unidentified North Korean official Friday as saying. "So far, mass deaths have not occurred as people have become more used to starvation than in the 1990s, but famine is a matter of time," the official was quoted as saying by the aid group. Good Friends also quoted Kim Ki-nam, 39, a resident of Sariwon, south of Pyongyang, as saying one or two deaths were happening every day in rural areas around the city. North Korea has relied on foreign assistance to help feed its 23 million people since the mid-'90s. This year's food situation has worsened because last year's harvests were hampered by devastating floods. The North also has refused to ask for help from South Korea after a new conservative government took office in February that has been critical of the Pyongyang regime. The aid group urged North Korea to acknowledge the situation's seriousness and ask for international help to prevent massive famine. It also urged South Korea to soften its position on the North and offer aid without waiting for Pyongyang's request. The United States has offered to provide food and held talks this week in North Korea over how to guarantee aid gets to the needy. North Korea said Thursday the talks were "in-depth and good." The World Food Program warned last month the North faces a food crisis, saying the country's annual food deficit is expected to nearly double from 2007 to 1.83 million tons. The U.N. agency estimated 6.5 million people were short of food, and the number could rise if shortages were not addressed.

[Ethiopian millions 'risk hunger'](#)

*BBC* – 20 May 2008

Six million children in Ethiopia are at risk of acute malnutrition following the failure of rains, the UN children's agency, Unicef, has warned. More than 60,000 children in two Ethiopian regions require immediate specialist feeding just to survive, Unicef says. The situation is expected to worsen in the next few months as crops fail. Aid agencies in Ethiopia say they are short of funds as donors concentrate on the emergencies in China and Burma. The agencies have fresh pictures showing listless children with distended stomachs - the tell-tale signs of acute malnutrition. "In just one clinic we have more than 250 children who will only survive with immediate treatment," said David Noguera, head of the Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) emergency unit. "This is absolutely alarming, we need a massive effort," he said. Paulette Jones, of the World Food Programme (WFP), said a combination of events had led to the situation. "We have drought - a really poor rainy season - and, of course, we have high food prices worldwide." The WFP estimates it needs to raise \$147m (£75m) to tackle Ethiopia's needs. "We are hopeful that donors will be forthcoming," said Ms Jones. Other aid workers are not so confident. They say the money just is not arriving, with donors concentrating on the disasters in Burma and China. The UN estimates it currently has a shortfall of 180,000 tonnes of food - and presently has no promises to meet this target.

[Oil rises above \\$130 for first time](#)

*CNN* – 21 May 2008

Oil prices rose above \$130 a barrel for the first time Wednesday as supply concerns mounted and the dollar weakened. U.S. crude for July delivery traded as high as \$130.25 a barrel in electronic trading. The July contract closed at \$128.98 in the floor session. The dollar had become less of a factor as attention turned to supply and demand concerns, but that seems to have changed this week. "We've seen an about-face turn on the dollar in the last couple of days," said Mark Pervan, senior commodity strategist at Australia & New Zealand Bank in Melbourne. "It looked like it was starting to recover, but I think there's a less certain outlook at the minute and ... enough reason to be buying commodities as a currency hedge again." In Tokyo's currency market, the dollar was trading in mid-103 yen level, down from the ¥104-¥105 range last week. And the euro has started to climb again against the dollar, rising above \$1.57 in Asian trading. Investors see hard commodities such as oil as a hedge against inflation and a weak dollar and pour into the future market when the greenback falls. A weak dollar also makes oil less expensive to buyers dealing in other currencies. The June contract, which expired Tuesday, shot to a record intraday high of \$129.60 before settling at \$129.07 a barrel, up \$2.02 from Monday. The expiration of that contract created additional volatility as traders scrambled to lock in positions. Tuesday's performance was the 10th time in the last 12 sessions that crude prices have hit trading or closing records, if not both. CNN International's Financial Editor Todd Benjamin explains why prices are rising. Oil futures are now selling for about twice what they were just a year ago. Prices have been propelled by a number of factors, including worries about insufficient supply, soaring global demand and a sliding dollar that has made oil cheaper for some buyers overseas. Speculative buying has also

helped push prices higher, analysts say. Industry observers in recent days have also pointed to especially strong demand for diesel in China, where power plants in some areas are running desperately short of coal and certain earthquake-hit regions are relying on diesel generators for power. The country is also ramping up diesel imports ahead of the Olympics, analysts say, driving up prices. Besides that, "major Chinese petrochemical companies are really struggling to keep up with demand. The trend is that we're going to continue to see pretty strong crude imports (from China) going forward," Pervan said. "That's what the market is really getting on board." Crude's latest surge also comes after Algerian Energy Minister Chakib Khelil, OPEC's current president, was quoted by a government newspaper as saying the cartel won't boost output before its next meeting on Sept. 9, adding to concerns about global supply. That added to worries about gasoline and diesel supplies at the start of the summer driving season in the U.S., where retail prices for the motor fuels are already at record levels. Many analysts expect prices for both fuels will continue to rise. In other Nymex trading, heating oil futures rose 1.01 cents to \$3.7851 a gallon while gasoline prices rose 0.53 cent to \$3.3097 a gallon. Natural gas futures, meanwhile, rose 9.6 cents to \$11.461 per 1,000 cubic feet.

### [China says quake death toll rises to 55,239](#)

*Reuters* – 22 May 2008

The death toll in China's worst earthquake in decades has risen to 55,239, Sichuan's vice governor Li Chengyun told a news conference in Beijing on Friday.

## **MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS**

### [Iraq war strains U.S. army mental health system](#)

*Reuters* – 6 May 2008

Fort Drum, a bleak U.S. Army base in upstate New York, is a test case for how the military is handling a looming mental health crisis. The military and its critics agree on one thing -- there are not enough therapists to treat all the soldiers who return from Iraq and Afghanistan traumatized by the experience. The 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team (2BCT) is the most-deployed brigade in the U.S. army since 2001. It served two tours in Afghanistan, totaling 11 months, and was sent to Iraq twice for tours of 12 and 15 months. "They're kind of a canary in a coal mine," said Paul Rieckhoff, a former Army captain who founded the advocacy group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "They're a good barometer to understand the human cost of the war." A report by advocacy group Veterans for America said the mental healthcare system at Fort Drum was not meeting the demands placed on it and had prepared inadequately for the return of more than 3,500 soldiers from Iraq late last year. "Even though we knew this group were coming back from their 4th deployment and there would be these problems, we still had massive waits of two months (for appointments)," Veterans for America spokeswoman Adrienne Willis said. The report, released in February, said there were not enough counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists, there was too much reliance on group therapy over individual care and there was a lack of continuity in care. The lack of a

hospital on base was also a problem. It said commanding officer Gen. Michael Oates deserved "commendation" for setting the tone that psychological wounds were legitimate combat wounds. Nevertheless, the stigma of mental problems kept many soldiers from speaking up, it said. Todd Benham, head of Fort Drum's behavioral health department, attributed long wait times to a lack of staff. He said the unit had plans to expand but it takes time to recruit, particularly in a rural area such as Fort Drum. "It's definitely a crunch, it's difficult recruiting and certainly it's more difficult up here," Benham said. "I don't think anybody is pretending the stigma has gone away or we didn't have significant wait times for a while," Benham said. "We understand there was an issue." "Yes, we recognize Fort Drum needs some help, but that's something we've been working on for a year or more," he said.

### [Pakistani militants agree truce](#)

*BBC* – 9 May 2008

Pro-Taleban militants in Swat, a former popular tourist area in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, have signed a truce with the government. Representatives of the two sides agreed to pursue a peace process through talks when they met at Fishing Hut Chakdara, in the Dir Lower district. The government hopes to make the truce permanent at subsequent talks. The militants are led by cleric Maulana Fazlullah who tried to impose Islamic law in the district last year. Military operations against his forces were still continuing in recent days, with several suspected militants detained and weapons seized. Muslim Khan, a spokesman for Maulana Fazlullah, told the BBC the militants did not wish to "spread anarchy in their own country". Under the truce, government forces cease operations against the militants while the militants desist from attacking security forces or causing damage to government installations. Wajid Ali Khan, regional minister in North West Frontier Province, said after the truce was signed that another round of talks would be held "for a permanent solution". Swat, known to some as Pakistan's "Little Switzerland" because of its picturesque mountains, was occupied by Maulana Fazlullah's militants last year. Thousands of troops arrived in November to drive them out, scaling the heights in surprise attacks in what was hailed as a successful operation by the government.

### [Relief boat sinks, leaving aid in Myanmar river](#)

*CNN* – 11 May 2008

A Red Cross boat delivering supplies to help 1,000 victims of last weekend's cyclone sank Sunday when it hit debris in the Irrawaddy Delta region, as the U.S. prepared to deliver relief supplies to Myanmar. "The crew managed to get to the safety of an island, along with four Red Cross staff who were on the boat," Red Cross official Joe Lowry said. "But we've lost most of the cargo." The double-decker relief boat was carrying about 100 bags of rice, 5,000 liters of drinking water, 10,000 water purification tablets, 200 water storage containers, 10 stretchers, 30 boxes of clothing and household items like soap. A submerged tree damaged the hull of the boat as it headed toward the delta township of Bogalay, which was hit hard by the cyclone, Lowry said. The boat sank quickly, leaving its cargo at the bottom of a muddy river, he said. The boat was traveling

from Yangon to Mawlamyinegyun when it sank, according to the Red Cross. "[It's] the first time we got a boat going with so much aid on it; the local Red Cross people are extremely saddened and distressed that they've lost this," Lowry said. "Thankfully no lives were lost."

### [Officials say Turkish planes bomb PKK in Northern Iraq](#)

*Reuters* – 12 May 2008

Turkish war planes bombed Kurdish separatist PKK rebels in northern Iraq overnight but there were no casualties, a security spokesman for Iraq's Kurdistan region said on Monday. Jabbar Yawar, spokesman for Iraq's Kurdish Peshmerga security forces, said the air strikes against suspected Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) positions occurred in a remote part of Dahuk province near the border with Turkey. In a separate incident, the Iranian military shelled rebels from a different Kurdish faction that operate from Iraq's Kurdistan region on Sunday, Yawar said. There were also clashes on the Iraq-Iran border between those rebels and Iranian forces but no casualties, he said. Iranian forces have often clashed in Iraqi border areas with rebels from the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), an offshoot of the PKK and which analysts say has bases in northeastern Iraq from where it operates against Iran. There were clashes between PJAK and Iranian troops ... but there were no casualties," Yawar said. Iraq's Kurdistan region borders both Turkey and Iran, and includes remote and rugged mountain ranges where Kurdish rebels from both the PKK and PJAK factions are holed up. Over the past week Turkish war planes have launched a series of raids against suspected PKK hideouts inside northern Iraq. The strikes are part of a wider military operation, backed by attack helicopters, tanks and artillery, against the PKK in restive southeast Turkey. Turkish troops conducted a large-scale land incursion across Iraq's northern border in February. Turkey blames the PKK for the deaths of 40,000 people since 1984, when the group took up arms to fight for a Kurdish homeland in southeast Turkey. Ankara, like the European Union and the United States, considers it a terrorist organisation.

### [Lebanese army says will intervene from Tuesday](#)

*Reuters* – 12 May 2008

Lebanon's army said it will use force from Tuesday to stop fighting in the country between pro- and anti-government forces that has recalled the 1975-90 civil war. "Army units will halt violations... in accordance with the law, even if that leads to the use of force," a military statement said on Monday. The order would be implemented from 6 a.m. (0300 GMT) on Tuesday. In the northern city of Tripoli, pro-government Sunni Muslim gunmen and militiamen allied to Hezbollah guerrillas fought on Monday in violence that has overturned the balance of power. The upheaval began when Iran-backed Hezbollah and its allies overran the strongholds of their Sunni political foes in Beirut last week. Six people were wounded in sporadic gun battles between Sunni fighters in Tripoli's Bab Tebbaneh area and pro-Hezbollah Alawites in neighboring Jebel Mohsen, security sources said. Hezbollah and its pro-Syrian allies have swept through Beirut and hills to the east in a series of dramatic victories since May 7, defeating loyalists of the U.S.-backed government before handing their conquests to the Lebanese army, which has

stayed out of the fighting so far. At least 36 people were killed on Sunday in fighting between Hezbollah and its pro-government Druze opponents east of Beirut, bringing the overall toll to 81 dead and about 250 wounded.

### [Mexico sends troops to fight Sinaloa drug cartel](#)

*Reuters* – 13 May 2008

Thousands of troops rolled into Mexico's violent Sinaloa state to fight a powerful drug cartel run by the country's most-wanted man, following a wave of police murders. Armed, camouflaged soldiers arrived in military transport planes as helicopters hovered overhead in the state capital, Culiacan, and troops joined federal police to set up roadblocks and patrol streets. Dozens of Hummer military vehicles, some with heavy machine guns, roared through the hot, rundown city on their way to the nearby town of Navolato, passing a bullet-ridden police vehicle on a tow truck. Marijuana-producing Sinaloa on Mexico's Pacific coast is home to a federation of drug gangs run by Joaquin 'Shorty' Guzman. He escaped from prison in a laundry van in 2001 and has declared war on rival cartels for control of lucrative smuggling routes into the United States. 'The last few weeks have been very violent in Sinaloa, with deaths and executions, with a bigger show of arms, brutality and firepower,' Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora told a news conference after a meeting with President Felipe Calderon's top security officials in Culiacan. Interior Minister Juan Camilo Mourino said 2,723 troops, federal police and investigative police were arriving in Sinaloa to supplement the 2,000 soldiers involved in drug eradication efforts in the state. The military deployment followed the killings last week of six senior police officers across Mexico, including Edgar Millan, one of Mexico's top federal policemen. Police say Mr Millan was killed in Mexico City by a hit man in the pay of the Sinaloa cartel because of his leading role in the arrest this year of dozens of the gang's gunmen. Culiacan residents welcomed the troop deployment. 'It's a relief because life has been very traumatic over the past few days. You walk down the street with fear,' said Mr Candelario Hernandez, a 52-year-old carpenter having his car searched by soldiers. More than 1,100 people have been killed in Mexico this year as drug gangs fight each other and the security forces. Mr Calderon, a conservative who has sent 25,000 troops and federal police to fight drug cartels across Mexico since late 2006, pledged last week to take back Mexican streets from drug peddlers and gunmen. Much of his effort has been focused on fighting drug gangs along the US-Mexico border, especially near Texas, where the Gulf cartel dominates. 'The Sinaloa cartel struck in Mexico City not only to kill troublesome officials ... but also to pose a problem for the Mexican government by increasing areas requiring forces, thereby requiring the government to consider splitting its forces,' said George Friedman at the US-based intelligence group Stratfor.

### [Spain drops charges against U.S. soldiers](#)

*CNN* – 13 May 2008

A Spanish court on Tuesday dropped charges against three U.S. soldiers in connection with the death of a Spanish TV cameraman in Iraq in 2003. Jose Couso, a Spanish television cameraman was killed five years ago by a shell that smashed into a hotel from

a US tank in Baghdad. In a ruling Tuesday, the court says "the evidence available is not sufficient to continue with the process." The soldiers named as Philip de Camp, Phillip Wolford, and Thomas Gibson, belonged to the U.S. 3rd Infantry, based in Fort Stewart, Georgia. A Ukrainian cameraman, Taras Portsyuk, for Reuters, also died in the attack on the Palestine Hotel, where other journalists were staying. The ruling Tuesday is the latest step in a long-running legal battle to indict the soldiers. According to a copy of the court order viewed by CNN, the judges in the case wrote that there was a difference between shots fired during peacetime by civilians versus shots fired by soldiers during war. "There is not a description of the facts here that permits them to be listed in the alleged crime," the majority court opinion said on Tuesday. Couso's family and some journalists have blamed the U.S. military, saying they should have known the Palestine Hotel, a tall structure in Baghdad, was a base for journalists, not combatants. Then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said American troops fired only after receiving hostile fire from the hotel and the matter received the highest attention, from President Bush and then-Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar. Couso's lawyer has previously said it would be difficult to put the soldiers on trial in Spain. The Pentagon, faced with similar charges from other national courts in the past, has not turned over U.S. soldiers.

#### [India: Soldier killed in Kashmir](#)

*CNN* – 19 May 2008

An Indian army trooper was shot to death Monday on the border between the Indian- and Pakistani-administered parts of Kashmir, the Indian Defense spokesman said. Lt. Col. Goswami refused to confirm if it was a violation of the bi-lateral cease-fire agreement between India and Pakistan for the border known as the Line of Control. There was small arms fire and grenades launched from across the Line of Control in the Mendhar sector on Monday morning, Goswami said. The Indian Army said last week that Pakistani troops fired in the Tangdhar sector of the Line of Control in northern Kashmir, which they called a clear cease-fire violation. The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan are scheduled to meet in Islamabad this week to resume talks between the two neighbors. Pakistan denied any weapons were fired from their side. Kashmir has been the source of bitter dispute and two wars between India and Pakistan. Both control parts of the region, which is predominantly Muslim. Kashmir has been in the throes of a bloody separatist campaign for the past 18 years. While the authorities here say 43,000 persons have been killed in the violence, various rights groups and non-governmental organizations have put the figure at twice that number.

#### [Senate approves \\$165 billion in new war money](#)

*Reuters* – 22 May 2008

The Senate on Thursday approved an additional \$165 billion to wage war in Iraq and Afghanistan for another year after lawmakers blocked proposed timetables for withdrawing American troops from Iraq. By a vote of 70-26, the Senate passed the new war money the Pentagon says it urgently needs to avoid civilian layoffs and the interruption of soldiers' paychecks within months. The House of Representatives still must weigh in on the legislation. Last week, it passed a drastically different bill that

failed to provide any new money for the wars and would withdraw U.S. combat troops from Iraq by the end of 2009. The House is likely to consider its next step in early June after lawmakers return from a week-long recess. President George W. Bush, speaking to U.S. troops at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, repeated his opposition to Congress setting troop withdrawal schedules or other conditions on the Pentagon. "The United States Congress needs to pass a responsible war funding bill that does not tie the hands of our commanders," Bush said. Assuming lawmakers ultimately give Bush the war funds he has requested, Congress will have appropriated more than \$800 billion for combat in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001. Most of the money has gone for the unpopular war in Iraq.

[Iraq commander expects further troop cuts](#)

*Reuters* – 22 May 2008

US Army Gen. David Petraeus, the top commander in Iraq, said on Thursday he expected to make further troop cuts after a 45-day freeze in withdrawals that begins in July. Petraeus also told senators considering his nomination to the U.S. military's top Middle East post that Iran was a destabilizing influence in the region. But he backed U.S. efforts to use diplomatic and economic pressure on Tehran, saying military action was a last resort. Petraeus also endorsed U.S. intelligence estimates that al Qaeda leaders are based in tribal areas of Pakistan and any future attack on the United States was likely to originate there. He pledged more help for Pakistan's government. Following a tour in Iraq marked by a steep decline in violence, Petraeus is slated to take over U.S. Central Command, responsible for military operations in an unstable swath of the world including the Middle East, Central Asia and East Africa. He has been in his current post since February 2007. Petraeus is overseeing a reduction in U.S. forces in Iraq to leave around 140,000 troops there by mid-July. He said he expected to recommend resuming withdrawals after taking stock until around the beginning of September. "My sense is that I will be able to make a recommendation at that time for some further reductions," he said, although he could not predict the size of any further troop cut. The United States has some 155,000 troops in Iraq, more than five years after the start of a war which is now broadly unpopular with the U.S. public and is likely to be a key issue in the presidential and congressional elections this November.