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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

[Officials: Teens trained for suicide bombings in Iraq](#)

CNN – 26 May 2008

Iraqi soldiers rounded up six teenagers in northern Iraq who were being trained, against their will, to carry out suicide bombings for al Qaeda in Iraq, the Interior Ministry said Monday. Troops conducting house-to-house searches in Mosul found six teens, ages 15 to 18, who were being trained to perpetrate attacks against Iraqi security forces, said ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Abdul Karim Khalaf. Insurgents had threatened to kill the boys or their families if they refused to comply with the training, Deputy Interior Minister Kamal Ali Hussein told reporters. "The Saudi insurgent threatened to rape our mothers and sisters, destroy our houses and kill our fathers if we did not cooperate with him," one of the youths told The Associated Press in Mosul. The boys were rounded up as part of the Mother of Two Springs operation targeting al Qaeda in Iraq in Mosul and Nineveh province. The offensive has netted the detentions of more than 1,300 suspects. The teens had been trained in recent weeks, Khalaf said. A Saudi national -- a suspected al Qaeda in Iraq operative -- had been one of their trainers, but he was believed to have died in a military operation, Khalaf said. It is not known where or when he was killed. The group of teens included the son of a female physician, the son of a college professor and four youths who belonged to families of poor vendors. All six boys were taught how to carry out suicide attacks with explosive belts and a date was fixed for each one of them, Hussein said, adding that Iraqi soldiers had questioned the boys. Iraqi troops rounded up the teens on the same day a suicide bomber drove a motorcycle into a checkpoint manned by police and a U.S.-backed Iraqi security group in northern Iraq, killing six people and wounding 22 others, local police said. The suicide blast occurred Monday in the Salaheddin provincial city of Tarmiya. The bomber, carrying a Saudi Arabian identification card, attacked a checkpoint guarded by police and members of the Sons of Iraq, the American-backed citizens' group that opposes al Qaeda in Iraq, police in Tikrit said. Police said the Saudi ID card contained the name of Sultan bin-Mohammed al-Ghamedih, 35. The checkpoint is near the house of a local leader of the citizens' group. The dead and wounded included police, civilians and Sons of Iraq members, police said. Sons of Iraq, or Awakening Council, groups have been targeted by al Qaeda in Iraq.

[Italy set for wider Afghan role](#)

BBC – 26 May 2008

Italy is willing to send its troops based in western Afghanistan to more dangerous areas of the country if requested by Nato, ministers say. Foreign Minister Franco Frattini said Italy was aiming to be able to move its forces faster and to a wider area. However, there are no plans to redeploy them on a more permanent basis. It was also reported that Italy would actually reduce the size of its contingent later in the year, to about 2,000 troops. "Our intention is to make a decrease in September of between 250 and 300," Defence Minister Ignazio La Russa told reporters at an EU meeting, according to Reuters news agency. Italian troops are based in western Afghanistan, which is not as volatile as the south, where Britain, Canada and the Netherlands are engaged in an intense fight against

the Taliban. Nato has urged other members to increase their contribution to the force, and to volunteer for service in the south, but no nations have come forward. Asked whether Italian troops could now be sent to the south, Mr Frattini said: "That will depend on the demands that are made of us." The BBC's Alistair Leithead, accompanying Italian troops in Sarobi, east of Kabul, says the Italians believe their approach of engaging with the local community is paying dividends. But he also says the Italians are operating in a relatively safe area, where they are keeping the peace, rather than trying to create a stable environment from lawlessness and chaos, as others are attempting in Helmand and Kandahar in the south.

[Car bomb explodes near Iranian embassy in Iraq](#)

CNN – 1 June 2006

A car bomb killed two people and wounded five others when it exploded near the Iranian embassy in central Baghdad Sunday, the interior ministry said. Also on Sunday, a U.S. military helicopter crashed south of Baghdad, wounding two American soldiers, the military said. In a news release, the military said mechanical failure may have been the cause of the crash. However, authorities plan on investigating further to determine the actual reason. The news release did not release any additional details.

[U.S. troop deaths in Iraq at wartime low](#)

Reuters – 1 June 2006

The number of Iraqi civilians killed in the same month plunged to 505 after reaching a seven-month high of 968 in April, figures obtained by Reuters from Iraq's interior, defense and health ministries showed. The U.S. military says violence in Iraq is at a four-year low following crackdowns by U.S. and Iraqi forces on Shi'ite militias in southern Basra and Baghdad and on al Qaeda in the northern city of Mosul, its last major urban stronghold. But a suicide bombing in the town of Hit in western Anbar province on Saturday that killed the local police chief underscored the fragility of Iraq's security. Police said a suicide bomber blew himself up at a checkpoint, killing police chief Lieutenant-Colonel Khalil Ibrahim al-Jazzaa, nine other policemen and three civilians. "The man, who was wearing a suicide vest, asked to meet the police chief to talk about a problem. When the policemen stopped him to check him, the bomber blew himself up," said Major Uday al-Dulaimi, a police officer in Hit. In Iraq's more stable south, Australia, one of the United States' staunchest allies, began pulling out 500 combat troops from Dhi Qar province, fulfilling a pledge by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to withdraw all troops this year. The website icasualties.org, which tracks U.S. fatalities in Iraq, said 19 U.S. soldiers died in May. U.S. troop deaths reached a seven-month high in April when 52 were killed.

TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Al Qaeda in Iraq "never closer to defeat": U.S. envoy](#)

Reuters – 24 May 2008

The U.S. ambassador to Iraq praised Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Saturday for cracking down on Shi'ite militias and Sunni Arab militants and said al Qaeda in Iraq had never been closer to defeat. "You are not going to hear me say that al Qaeda is defeated, but they've never been closer to defeat than they are now," Ryan Crocker told reporters during a visit to the Shi'ite holy cities of Najaf and Kerbala in southern Iraq. Maliki, a Shi'ite, has led a crackdown on Sunni Arab militants in the northern city of Mosul, where the government says al Qaeda fighters took refuge after being driven from other areas. Maliki has also confronted Shi'ite militias in Baghdad's Sadr City slum and in the southern city of Basra. Crocker said it was important that Iraqi forces were leading operations in Basra and Mosul -- where U.S.-led coalition forces played a supporting role -- and acting alone in Sadr City. "That's a level of capability that simply wasn't possible even six months ago," he said. "The government, the prime minister are showing a clear determination to take on extremist armed elements that challenge the authority of the government and they've made it clear that they will do that no matter who these elements are," he said. Iraqi security forces initially met strong resistance in Basra and Sadr City from the Mehdi Army militia of anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, but are now patrolling both areas.

[Colombia's top FARC commander dead](#)

Reuters – 25 May 2008

The founder and chief commander of Colombia's FARC rebel force, Manuel Marulanda, has died after more than 40 years fighting the state from jungle and mountain camps, the government said on Saturday. If confirmed, the death of Manuel Marulanda, who organized the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia guerrillas in the 1960s, would be the heaviest blow yet to Latin America's oldest insurgency, already weakened by a military setbacks. Reports that Marulanda, also known as "Sureshot," had died or fallen ill have surfaced before, but they were never confirmed. He was in his late 70s and has not been seen in public since failed peace talks more than five years ago. "Through military intelligence, we learned Pedro Antonio Marin, alias Manuel Marulanda or Sureshot, the principal chief of the FARC, is dead," the Defense Ministry said in a statement. "The cause of death is still to be confirmed." The legendary rebel chief either died of a heart attack, according to FARC information, or during military bombardments in late March in the southern jungles where he spent much of guerrilla life, the ministry said without providing proof. President Alvaro Uribe, speaking to reporters, stopped short of claiming victory against the FARC. "These sources are serious, we hope," he said. Uribe's father was killed during a botched FARC kidnapping two decades ago and is popular for cracking down on the rebels. A shy, peasant who once sold candy for a living, Marulanda took up arms in a left-wing insurgency fighting for social justice in the 1960s. But after four decades, the FARC has been weakened by Uribe's U.S.-backed security campaign. With little popular support, Marulanda's rebels have been driven into remote

jungles and mountains, but remain a potent force in some areas, bolstered by funds from drug smuggling. U.S. and E.U. officials list the FARC as terrorists.

[Somali pirates hold Dutch firm's crew hostage](#)

CNN – 27 May 2008

A Dutch shipping company has been in contact with Somali pirates who hijacked a ship with nine crew members as it traveled through the Gulf of Aden on Sunday, a spokesman said Tuesday. Lars Walder, of Reider Shipping BV, which owns the MV *Amiya Scan*, revealed the company has been in contact with the hijackers and that none of the crew had been harmed. "Everybody was fine under the circumstances," he said, speaking from Winschoten, Netherlands. "They were all fine ... [and] were treated quite well." The ship was anchored off the coast of Somalia, within Somalia's 20-kilometer (12-mile) territorial limit, Walder said. He would not comment on the pirates' demands out of concern for the crew of four Russians and five Filipinos, and would not say whether the shipping company was negotiating with them. He said he assumed the pirate gang was armed but they have not told him how many they are or whether they are associated with any group. The ship, carrying parts of an old oil rig, was chartered by Scan-Trans Shipping, and was traveling from Kenya to Romania, Walder said. It flies under an Antiguan flag. "Of course, we hope we get our people," Walder said. He said that the shipping company had contacted all relevant countries for help, including the Netherlands, Russia, and Somalia. Wary of previous hijackings near the Somali coast, Walder said the MV *Amiya Scan* had not been traveling within the country's 12-mile (20-kilometer) territorial limit when it was seized. There have been 24 attacks on ships near the Somali coast and in the Gulf of Aden this year, said Capt. Pottengal Mukundan, director of the International Maritime Bureau, which tracks pirate attacks. Of those 24, he said, seven have been successful hijackings. Cyrus Mody of the same bureau said that Somali pirates seem to take ships "purely for financial gain." In the seven cases this year, most were resolved with a ransom payment, Mody said, adding that the pirates in Somalia typically treat the crews on the hijacked ships well. Mody added there are at least four distinct pirate groups in the country and it is difficult to tell which group is responsible for which hijacking. A draft resolution introduced to the U.N. Security Council last month would combat Somali hijackings by allowing foreign governments to pursue pirate vessels into Somalia's territorial waters and make arrests. The resolution, sponsored by the United States, Panama, France and Britain, noted that Somalia's transitional government welcomes international assistance. Maritime groups say they hope the resolution is adopted and expanded to other waters.

[U.S. ports vulnerable to terrorists, probe finds](#)

CNN – 27 May 2008

A Department of Homeland Security program to strengthen port security has gaps that terrorists could exploit to smuggle weapons of mass destruction in cargo containers, congressional investigators have found. The report by the Government Accountability Office, being released Tuesday, assesses the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT), a federal program established after the September 11, 2001, attacks

to deter a potential terrorist strike via cargo passing through 326 of the nation's airports, seaports and designated land borders. Under the program, roughly 8,000 importers, port authorities and air, sea and land carriers are granted benefits such as reduced scrutiny of their cargo. In exchange, the companies submit a security plan that must meet U.S. Customs and Border Protection's minimum standards and allow officials to verify their measures are being followed. A 2005 GAO report found many of the companies were receiving the reduced cargo scrutiny without the required full vetting by U.S. Customs, a division of DHS. The agency has since made some improvements, but the new report found that Customs officials still couldn't provide guarantees that companies were in compliance. The GAO urged Customs and Border Protection to require consideration of third-party and other outside audits and take steps to make certain companies comply with any additional security improvements requested. The report also calls for some technological improvements to help improve consistency and better information-gathering in Customs' security checks. Responding in part, Customs officials in the report agreed they could do more to follow up on suggested security improvements but noted that employees often use their expert discretion in assessing the potential danger before certifying a company. The agency has also said the program overall has made the nation safer. Congress has been working to improve port security after the independent Sept. 11 commission cited the potential dangers in its 2004 final report. The commission stated that compared to commercial aviation, "opportunities to do harm are as great, or greater, in maritime or surface transportation." DHS has said that while the likelihood of terrorists smuggling weapons of mass destruction into the U.S. in cargo containers is low, the nation's vulnerability and consequences of such an attack are potentially high. Maine Sen. Susan Collins, the top Republican on the Senate Homeland Security Committee, said the report shows the importance of the private sector's continued cooperation in helping improve port security. "I will continue to work with DHS and the private sector to ensure the effectiveness of the crucial port security program," she said. The GAO study examined a sample of 25 company reviews by Customs and Border Protection from March 1, 2006 through September 30, 2006. Investigators interviewed officials, reviewed documents and studied the agency's minimum security criteria to see if standards were being met.

[No new evidence of al Qaeda threat despite report: U.S.](#)

Reuters – 28 May 2008

There is no evidence of a direct threat from al Qaeda or that the group has obtained weapons of mass destruction, U.S. intelligence officials said on Tuesday, despite reports that al Qaeda will release a new video urging jihadists to use such weapons to attack the West. FBI spokesman Richard Kolko said the bureau sent out an alert to U.S. law enforcement agencies about the expected video. "We got information the tape is coming," he said. "We sent out an alert to law enforcement to let them know the tape was coming." Kolko said the alert was a routine precaution sent to 1,800 U.S. law enforcement agencies. ABC News reported on Tuesday evening that the video was expected in the next 24 hours. However, IntelCenter, a U.S.-based terrorism monitoring firm, said the video being referred to was actually released at least as early as Monday and is entitled "Nuclear Jihad, The Ultimate Terror." IntelCenter described it as "a jihadi supporter

video compilation" and said that it was not from an official group. "These videos almost always are comprised of old video footage that is edited together to make a new video," IntelCenter said. "The material in these types of videos do not qualify as an official message from al-Qaeda or any other group."

[Anonymous warning precedes Spain bomb blast](#)

CNN – 1 June 2006

A bomb exploded in the northern port city of Zarautz in Spain's Basque region Sunday, slightly wounding three people. Two police officers suffered minor ear damage and another person was hurt by shattered glass in the explosion, Spain's EFE news agency said. Shortly before the blast, someone called transportation officials and said a bomb would go off near a construction company, EFE said. Police cordoned off the area and asked residents to remain in their homes. Damage to the construction company building was not significant, EFE said. The news agency did not say whether anyone claimed responsibility for the attack. On Friday, the Basque separatist group ETA warned that its violent 40-year-fight for Basque independence "will continue" if the Spanish government doesn't offer "an adequate response to the root of the problem." In the statement, ETA also claimed responsibility for four recent attacks, including the car bomb explosion at a Civil Guard barracks in northern Spain earlier in May that killed a Civil Guard member and wounded four others. The warning came in an ETA statement published in the Basque newspaper Gara, just 10 days after police arrested the group's suspected leader in France. Five other suspected ETA operatives were arrested in France and Spain as well. ETA is blamed for more than 800 deaths and thousands of injuries during its violent campaign since 1968. The European Union and the United States list ETA as a terrorist group.

[Al-Qaeda claims attack on Danish embassy](#)

Reuters – 5 June 2008

Al-Qaeda said on Wednesday it was behind a suicide attack on Denmark's embassy in Pakistan, saying it was in revenge for the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad. According to an Internet statement, signed by Al-Qaeda's leader in Afghanistan, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, said Denmark had 'not apologised' for the publication of the cartoons.

[Al-Qaeda's Zawahiri urges attack on Israel](#)

AFP – 5 June 2008

Al-Qaeda number two Ayman al-Zawahiri urged Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip to escalate attacks on Israel while slamming Egypt's closure of the crossing point with Gaza, in an Internet audio message posted on Wednesday. 'Do not give up... Increase your martyrdom (suicide) attacks, the number of rockets you launch (on southern Israel) and your ambushes. There is no other solution,' Zawahiri said in a message posted on an Islamist website on the occasion of the anniversary of the June 5, 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Gaza has been subjected to an Israeli blockade since the Islamist Hamas movement seized power in the coastal strip last June. 'To those who try to make you despair, tell them ... America is being defeated by our brothers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Why should we despair,' Zawahiri said in the message titled 'on the occasion of the setback'. The term 'setback' is used by the Arabs usually to refer to the defeat of the army of Egypt, Jordan and Syria by Israel, which led to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the Golan Heights in Syria and Egypt's Sinai, which was returned to Egypt after signing the Camp David peace accords in 1978. Egyptian-born Zawahiri slammed the Egyptian authorities for blocking the Rafah crossing point, the only gateway for Gaza, accusing the Egyptian government of aiding Israel by besieging the Palestinians. 'I say to my brothers in Gaza, those who are putting you under siege are traitors, starting from the soldier in the central security forces who is guarding the treason fence to (Egyptian President) Hosni Mubarak,' he said. 'It is your right to enter Egypt whenever you wish, and to destroy treason fences whenever you want,' he said. In January, Gaza militants blew open large sections of the border fence, sending hundreds of thousands of Palestinians pouring into Sinai to stock up on basic goods before it was resealed a few days later. 'I say to my Muslim brothers in Sinai, help your brothers in Gaza and take part in their fight. If they start bringing down the fence of treason, give them a hand,' he said. 'This shameful fence deprives our people in Gaza from food and medicine, while it opens welcoming 50,000 Israeli tourist over Passover to practice immoralities in Sinai,' he added. In his last message posted on April 22, Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant blasted Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip now, over their reported readiness to consider a peace deal with Israel.

DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

[Russia accused of annexing the Arctic for oil reserves by Canada](#)

The Telegraph – 18 May 2008

The battle for "ownership" of the polar oil reserves has accelerated with the disclosure that Russia has sent a fleet of nuclear-powered ice breakers into the Arctic. It has reinforced fears that Moscow intends to annex "unlawfully" a vast portion of the ice-covered Arctic, beneath which scientists believe up to 10 billion tons of gas and oil could be buried. Russian ambition for control of the Arctic has provoked Canada to double to \$40 million (£20.5 million) funding for work to map the Arctic seabed in support its claim over the territory. The Russian ice breakers patrol huge areas of the frozen ocean for months on end, cutting through ice up to 8ft thick. There are thought to be eight in the region, dwarfing the British and American fleets, neither of which includes nuclear-powered ships. Canada also plans to open an army training centre for cold-weather fighting at Resolute Bay and a deep-water port on the northern tip of Baffin Island, both of which are close to the disputed region. The country's defence ministry intends to build a special fleet of patrol boats to guard the North West Passage. The crisis has raised the spectre of Russia and the West joining in a new cold war over the Arctic unless the United Nations can resolve the dispute. Liam Fox, the shadow defence secretary, told *Telegraph*: "Four of the five Arctic powers are Nato members, yet Nato seems ill-

configured to be able to respond to the sort of activities we have seen from the Russians. We need to ensure Nato has the will and the capability to deter Russian activity that contravenes international laws or treaties." Jonathan Eyal, of the Royal United Services Institute, said the dispute could simmer for years. "The message from Vladimir Putin is that Russia will no longer be shackled to treaties signed by Yeltsin when he was half drunk or when Russia was on its knees," he said. "This dispute is not only about oil reserves which might or might not exist, it is about the control of sea lanes. Russia's movements could pitch it into a serious territorial dispute with the US for the first time." Tension in the Arctic is also being heightened by the revival of Russian Cold War-era manoeuvres. Hardly a week passes without Russian aircraft over-flying the North Pole, simulating strikes on "enemy" bases and shipping. The crisis erupted last year when a Russian submarine crew planted a flag on the Lomonosov Ridge, a 1,240-mile stretch of seabed that Moscow says is Russian. Derided at the time as a stunt, the move focused attention on the race for the Arctic's hidden treasures. No country owns the Arctic Ocean or the North Pole, but under the 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention, each country with a coast has exploitation rights in a limited "exclusive economic zone". On ratification of the convention – and America has yet to ratify it – each country has 10 years to make claims extending its zone. Russia rivals Saudi Arabia as the world's largest oil producer and is estimated to have the largest natural gas supplies. Energy earnings are funding a \$189 billion (£97 billion) overhaul of its armed forces.

[Merkel calls for closer NATO-Russia ties](#)

IHT – 27 May 2008

Chancellor Angela Merkel has issued a strong call for NATO and Russia to forge closer ties to avoid deepening misunderstandings over the eastward expansion of NATO and U.S. plans to deploy part of an antiballistic missile shield in Eastern Europe. "If we don't talk to each other, it is no wonder there are prejudices," Merkel said in a speech late Monday to NATO's parliamentary group in Berlin. Merkel suggested more frequent NATO-Russia summit meetings, but stressed that Moscow would be given neither a say nor a veto in alliance issues, including expansion. At least, she said, "both sides would appreciate each other's fears and interests." Merkel made clear that she fully supported U.S. plans to deploy the missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, insisting it was "of the highest importance" since it would provide security against rogue states. Merkel, a conservative Christian Democrat who grew up in East Germany, was speaking a day before Senator John McCain of Arizona, the presumptive Republican nominee in the U.S. presidential election, outlined a series of initiatives that would involve a new engagement with Russia, as well as other nuclear powers. Merkel took office in late 2005 promising to be more critical than her Social Democrat predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, of Russia on matters such as human rights. Since then, however, the Social Democrats, partners in Merkel's coalition government, have pushed hard for reaching out to Russia, to the point of being accused by conservative commentators of being "equidistant" from Moscow and Washington. A senior Russian general warned Tuesday that the Russian military was prepared to respond to the U.S. missile defense plans. Lieutenant General Yevgeni Buzhinsky said that Russia was considering "asymmetrical" steps if the United States stationed interceptors in Poland and radars in the Czech Republic. Buzhinsky, who heads

the Russian Defense Ministry's international cooperation department, declined to elaborate. Buzhinsky acknowledged that the United States had offered to share information about the system and allow Russian monitors to visit the sites provided the Polish and Czech governments agreed. But he said this had not dispelled Kremlin belief that the missile shield would harm Russia's security. "We welcome these proposals as a step in the right direction, the acknowledgment that the Russian concerns are well-grounded," said Buzhinsky. "But the United States needs to abandon its plans to deploy missile defense components in Europe if it wants to remove Russia's concerns." The missile shield and NATO expansion into Georgia and Ukraine are considered among the most important issues when Merkel meets President Dmitri Medvedev of Russia in Germany early next month, his first visit to Berlin since being sworn in this month. On his first foreign visit as president last week, Medvedev and President Hu Jintao of China condemned the planned U.S. missile shield as a setback to international trust likely to upset the international balance of power. The lobbying over Ukraine and Georgia joining NATO is likely to intensify through December, when alliance foreign ministers are expected to decide the matter. Poland, Sweden and the Baltic countries are pushing hard for Ukraine and Georgia to be put on the fast track to NATO membership. This step, known as a Membership Action Plan, was denied the two countries, both formerly part of the Soviet Union, at a NATO summit meeting in Bucharest in April. Once in NATO, the two countries would be under the protection of the alliance. Germany, France and other members insisted in Bucharest that Ukraine and Georgia were not ready to join. Public opinion in Ukraine is deeply divided over joining the U.S.-led alliance. Two separatist regions of Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, have strong Russian backing. Merkel fears that NATO could be dragged into the dispute between Georgia and Russia if Georgia was offered membership. Medvedev's predecessor, Vladimir Putin, sworn in as Prime Minister this month, has made clear that Moscow opposes NATO expansion - as it did in the 1990s, when Russia was much weaker following the Soviet collapse. "The appearance of a powerful military bloc on our borders will be taken by Russia as a direct threat to the security of our country," Putin said in Bucharest. He also dismissed arguments by the NATO secretary general, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, that NATO was a catalyst for supporting stable democracies and that Russia should welcome NATO neighbors for this reason. "NATO is not a democratizer," Putin retorted. "The entry of Latvia into NATO has not changed a thing for those hundreds of thousands of people," he added, referring to ethnic Russians who live in that country - once part of the Soviet Union - who the Kremlin says face discrimination.

[Iran's Ahmadinejad requests meeting with pope](#)

Reuters – 27 May 2008

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has asked for an audience next week with Pope Benedict which would be the first meeting between the two leaders, a diplomatic source said on Tuesday. Ahmadinejad is among the heads of state expected to visit Rome to attend a June 3-5 United Nations summit on global food security, hosted by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. Vatican sources said earlier this week that it was not yet clear if the pope would meet individual heads of state attending the U.N. event or hold a collective audience for them in order to save time. The Vatican has criticized

Ahmadinejad for calling for Israel to be wiped off the map. The Holy See has diplomatic ties with Iran and Pope Benedict has met Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki. The pontiff has repeatedly encouraged dialogue to resolve differences over Iran's disputed nuclear program, which the West says is aimed at making nuclear bombs. Italy's foreign ministry has already ruled out the possibility that conservative Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi will hold bilateral talks with the Iranian leader, saying there will not be enough time.

[Lebanon's Siniora set to lead new government](#)

Reuters – 27 May 2008

Lebanon's parliamentary majority coalition agreed on Tuesday to nominate Prime Minister Fouad Siniora to form the country's first government under newly elected President Michel Suleiman. The nomination, agreed at a late-night meeting of coalition leaders, means that U.S.-backed Siniora will be appointed to head the new cabinet in which the Hezbollah-led opposition is guaranteed effective veto power. The 'March 14' coalition will officially inform Suleiman of its choice when he consults parliament on Wednesday. The president has to appoint the prime minister nominated by a majority of MPs. The prime minister must be a Sunni Muslim under Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system. Siniora's nomination is seen as a moral boost to a majority battered by major political and military setbacks at the hands of Hezbollah in recent weeks. Many opposition deputies are expected to oppose his nomination. The 18-month conflict between the U.S.-backed ruling alliance, which has struggled against Syrian influence in Lebanon, and the opposition, led by Damascus- and Tehran-backed Hezbollah, was ended last week by a Qatari-mediated deal. "March 14 leaders agreed unanimously to nominate his excellency Prime Minister Fouad Siniora to form the new government in line with the Doha agreement," the coalition said in a statement. Majority leader Saad al-Hariri thought of getting the post himself but opted to keep on his close ally Siniora, mainly because the new government will stay in office only until the 2009 general election, politicians said. Siniora, 65, has been prime minister since July 2005. He had been the target of an opposition campaign since November 2006 to force him to resign. His cabinet's May 6 decision to investigate Hezbollah's private telecommunication network and to fire the head of airport security, who was seen as close to the guerrilla group, sparked Lebanon's worst fighting since the 1975-90 civil war. Hezbollah, a Shi'ite group, routed followers of Hariri and other coalition leaders in six days of fighting that killed 81. The government later rescinded the decisions. Suleiman was elected on Sunday as part of the Doha agreement. The deal met the opposition's demand for effective veto power in cabinet and set a new general election law.

[Ottawa plans huge claim to resource-rich Arctic seabed](#)

The Globe and Mail – 27 May 2008

Canada is preparing to claim an area of the Arctic Ocean seabed equivalent in size to the Prairie provinces as part of Ottawa's aggressive effort to defend Canadian interests in the North, Natural Resources Minister Gary Lunn said yesterday. Mr. Lunn is scheduled to attend an Arctic Council meeting today in Greenland with four other countries that have

significant - and in some cases, competing - claims to territorial jurisdiction beyond the traditional 200-nautical-mile limit. "We will be reaffirming our commitment about defending and protecting our sovereignty in the Arctic," Mr. Lunn said in an interview yesterday. "It's a priority for our government. The Prime Minister has said: 'Use it or lose it.' And we're not going to lose it." Denmark is host of the Greenland meeting, which will also have representatives from Russia, Norway and the United States. All five countries are preparing claims to the subsea continental shelf under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, although the Americans have yet to ratify the treaty. The participants will discuss how to proceed with economic and social development in the North, and how to give northerners more control, Mr. Lunn said. In doing so, they are attempting to prevent an unbridled resource rush in which countries stake competing claims and ignore social and environmental problems in their haste to exploit what some believe is the planet's last great, untapped source of energy and mineral resources. The U.S. Geological Survey has estimated that as much as 25 per cent of the world's remaining oil and gas reserves lies under the Arctic Ocean, and access to those high Arctic waters is improving as a result of melting sea-ice. Russia sparked a furor last summer when a submarine planted a flag on a contested area of the seabed, sparking fears of a 19th-century-style competition for territory among great powers. The United States has sent icebreakers into waters Canada believes should fall under its control. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has pledged to beef up Canada's military presence in the Arctic. He also recently vetoed MacDonald Dettwiler and Associates Ltd.'s planned sale of its space robotics and satellite technology business to a U.S. company on the grounds that Canada has a strategic interest in maintaining domestic ownership over the firm's Radarsat 2 satellite, which provides surveillance of the Far North. Mr. Lunn said yesterday that Canadian scientists are amassing evidence that the Lomonosov Ridge, which extends under the Arctic Ocean, originates in the North American continent. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea was fashioned to prevent territorial claims based on raw force, and has a clear process for establishing jurisdiction. Under the treaty, countries have jurisdiction for 111 kilometres beyond the base of a continental shelf, but that claim can be extended for under-sea ridges extending from the shelf. Ottawa will spend \$40-million over the next several years for scientists from the Geological Survey of Canada to map the Arctic Ocean and provide conclusive evidence that the Lomonosov Ridge is, in fact, part of the North American continental shelf. If the UN validates that claim, Canada can assert sovereignty over the seabed all along the ridge, although experts expect Canada will claim the area west of the ridge and Denmark will assert sovereignty over the area east of the ridge and closer to Greenland. Russia says it has conclusive evidence the Lomonosov Ridge extends from the Eurasian continent. Mr. Lunn said that, in total, Canada's claim would be equivalent in size to the three Prairie provinces - or about 1.8 million square kilometres. He said the UN body should easily validate Canada's claim, which will be submitted in 2013. He said Canada needs to extend sovereignty over the region to ensure that any resource development is socially and environmentally responsible.

[Trying to head off an Arctic 'gold rush'](#)

BBC – 28 May 2008

Five states bordering on the potentially energy-rich Arctic Ocean have met in Greenland in an attempt to head off a new "gold rush" in the high north. They agreed to settle disputes through the UN in an orderly way. "The five nations have now declared that they will follow the rules," said the Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moller. "We have hopefully quelled all myths about a race for the North Pole once and for all." However, there is still all to play for in terms of exploiting resources and it remains to be seen if the procedures are used. The US Geological Survey estimates that the Arctic could contain 25% of the world's undiscovered oil and gas. A key aim of the meeting - organised by Denmark and also attended by Russia, the United States, Canada and Norway - was to reaffirm the rules governing rights over the seabed contained in the UN Law of the Sea Convention. This says that a country can make a claim for drilling and mineral rights based on the extension of its continental shelf. The rights would extend 200 nautical miles (370km) from the edge of the shelf. Already, Russia has made a huge claim on the basis that an underwater feature, the Lomonosov Ridge, runs from Siberia to the North Pole. It argues that Russia owns the rights extending from the ridge, and that would include the North Pole. Last year a Russian submersible planted a metal Russian flag on the seabed under the Pole to illustrate its claim. Russia's claim is currently being considered by a technical panel, and in the meantime has been disputed by other states. Norway, Canada and Denmark have lodged their own claims to various sectors. A former Canadian Foreign Minister, Peter MacKay, said of the Russian flag expedition: "This is posturing. This is the true north strong and free [a line from the Canadian national anthem], and they're fooling themselves if they think dropping a flag on the ocean floor is going to change anything. There is no question over Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic... You can't go around the world these days dropping a flag somewhere. This isn't the 14th or 15th century." The convention lays down a procedure for settling disputes. It says they should be arbitrated by an international panel or the International Court of Justice. However, such arbitration has to be agreed to by both or all sides in a dispute, and it is not yet clear if this would happen. The potential for disagreement is there. There are number of overlapping claims across the Arctic, including a dispute between Canada and the United States over the fabled Northwest Passage, which is opening up for ice-free transit.

[Iran strike an unattractive last resort: Bolton](#)

Reuters – 28 May 2008

Military action against Iran would be a last resort but the United States and its allies have not done enough to promote the alternative, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said on Wednesday. John Bolton, who was a leading hawk in President George W. Bush's administration, told an audience at the Hay literary Festival that five years of "failed" negotiation with Iran over its nuclear program had left just two options for dealing with the issue -- regime change and use of force. "The use of military force is an extremely unattractive option and only to be used as a last resort," he said, adding he would favor regime change. Bolton said the elements for regime change were present in

Iran -- the economy was in difficulties, young Iranians could see the possibility of a different life and there were ethnic tensions within the country. But he added that the United Nations and its allies had not done enough to bring about the required change. "I wish that we had had a much more vigorous policy five years ago," he said. Bolton, in Hay to promote his book "Surrender is not an Option", said the insistence of Britain, France and Germany on trying to negotiate a solution with Iran and U.S. acquiescence in this policy had failed. "Today Iran is five years closer to having a nuclear weapons capability," he said. Western leaders fear Iran aims to build atomic weapons and the United Nations has hit Tehran with three rounds of sanctions since 2006, demanding it cease nuclear enrichment activities. Tehran has refused, saying its nuclear program is peaceful.

[Arctic claimants say they will obey UN rules](#)

Reuters – 29 May 2008

Five Arctic coastal nations agreed on Wednesday to let the UN rule on conflicting territorial claims on the region's seabed, which may hold up to one fourth of the world's undiscovered hydrocarbon reserves. 'We affirmed our commitment to the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims,' US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte told a news conference. Ministers from Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States met in Greenland for a two-day summit to discuss sovereignty over the Arctic Ocean seabed. Under the 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention, coastal states own the seabed beyond existing 200-nautical mile (370-km) zones if it is part of a continental shelf of shallower waters. The rules aim to fix shelves' outer limits on a clear geological basis, but have created a tangle of overlapping Arctic claims. The United States has not yet ratified the convention, but Mr Negroponte urged Congress to do so as soon as possible. The countries, most major oil exporters, agreed to settle conflicting territorial claims by the law until a UN body could rule on the disputes. Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moller called the meeting in his country's self-governing province to try to end squabbling over ownership of huge tracts of the Arctic seabed, although it will be several decades before oil drilling in the deep Arctic sea is feasible. Also attending were Greenland Premier Hans Enoksen, Russian and Norwegian Foreign Ministers Sergei Lavrov and Jonas Gahr Stoere and Canadian Natural Resources Minister Gary Lunn. 'The declaration reflects the will of all participants to resolve all issues which might evolve in the spirit of cooperation and on the basis of international law,' said Mr Lavrov. Russia last summer angered the other Arctic nations by planting a flag on the seabed under the North Pole, an incident Mr Lavrov dismissed as insignificant on Wednesday.

[Israel sends back Hezbollah spy](#)

BBC – 1 June 2006

An Israeli citizen convicted of spying for Hezbollah in 2002, Nissim Nasser, has been deported to Lebanon. And amid rumours the release might be part of a prisoner swap, Lebanese group Hezbollah returned remains of Israeli soldiers killed in the 2006 war. Mr Nasser was born in Lebanon to a Jewish mother and a Shia Muslim father. He left the country in 1982 and became an Israeli citizen. Israel revoked his citizenship when his six-

year sentence ended a month ago. Mr Nasser was driven to the border crossing near Lebanon's southern town of Naqoura in an unmarked white jeep and handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Hezbollah officials had prepared a celebratory party for his return, with a stage erected near the border and loudspeakers blaring patriotic music across a main square. A more extensive prisoner swap between the two sides could involve two Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah in 2006 - an act which prompted the 33-day war between Israel and the Shia militant group - and a number of Lebanese citizens held by Israel. There has been no comment from Hezbollah on those rumours, and Israel has denied that this deportation is part of any wider deal. But as Mr Nasser was released, Hezbollah said it had handed over the remains of two Israeli soldiers killed during the 2006 war to the ICRC, in order that they could be returned to Israel. The ICRC confirmed it had received a box of human remains from Hezbollah which it had turned it over to Israel. The exchange was a clear signal that negotiations had been going on behind the scenes, possibly facilitated by German mediators, says the BBC's Mike Sergeant in Beirut. Born in 1968, Mr Nasser left Lebanon during the Israeli invasion of 1982 and joined his mother's family in Israel, where he settled near Tel Aviv.

[Gates plan for Korea reflects reduced sense of threat](#)

IHT – 3 June 2008

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Tuesday that he supported extending the tours of thousands of U.S. troops stationed here to three years and allowing their spouses and children to live with them during their assignments. Gates's endorsement adds new momentum to a policy shift favored by commanders to improve the quality of life for most of the 28,500 troops assigned here on unaccompanied 12-month tours because South Korea is considered a combat zone. It would also reverse decades of Pentagon policy for South Korea, acknowledging that the threat of an attack from the North has grown less likely in the face of an unwavering American deterrent force and the growth of an increasingly capable South Korean military. "I don't think anybody considers the Republic of Korea today a combat zone," Gates said here on the final day of a weeklong trip to Asia, which included stops in Guam, Singapore and Thailand. But Gates noted that extending tours and allowing families to join troops would require construction of new housing and consideration of other financial and logistical details, suggesting that such a step was still probably years away. The step would align the policy in South Korea with that in Germany and other overseas bases. Aides to Gates said that the next step would be for each of the armed services to determine how to incorporate three-year tours in South Korea with other personnel duty rotations worldwide. "Our goal is to rapidly reach the point when all U.S. service members can bring their families to Korea and stay here for a normal three-year tour," General Walter Sharp of the army said Tuesday. He spoke during a ceremony at Yongsan garrison in which he assumed command of American forces on the Korean peninsula from General B.B. Bell, who is retiring. Only about 10 percent of the forces deployed to South Korea, most of them senior officers, are now authorized to have families with them. Extending the length of tours would be another major change in the contours of the American military presence here. Over the past few years, U.S. troops have been relocating from bases near the demilitarized zone to new posts farther south, leaving South Korean troops to take over most of the responsibility

along the front. Moving the American troops away from the border with North Korea, where they are within easy range of 12,000 artillery pieces and rocket launchers, gives them a greater capacity to absorb and respond to a North Korean offensive. The shift of American forces has the added benefit of defusing tensions with South Koreans. Many American bases built decades ago in rural areas have since been swallowed up by the urban sprawl from the South Korean capital, Seoul. Gates said that in a meeting Tuesday with South Korea's defense minister, Lee Sang-hee, he reaffirmed the realignment plan as well as a transition of wartime control of allied forces to a South Korean joint military command by 2012. Gates said they also discussed their mutual interest in broadening their security relationship beyond the Korean peninsula to regional and global issues. South Korea, for instance, has deployed 650 troops to Iraq, in a largely symbolic mission to Erbil in the northern part of the country. The American military presence in South Korea has declined by about 9,000 troops in the past five years, with some of those forces now tapped for regular combat rotations in Iraq and Afghanistan. To offset the drop in American troops, U.S. commanders have come up with plans to rely in large part on a new generation of sensors, precision-guided bombs and high-speed transport ships to deter and, if necessary, counter the unpredictable dictatorship in the North, Pentagon officials say.

[Medvedev replaces chief of Russia's armed forces](#)

AP – 3 June 2008

President Dmitri Medvedev dismissed the chief of the general staff of the Russian armed forces Tuesday, moving to tighten the Kremlin's grip on the massive military and its purse strings. Medvedev announced the removal of General Yuri Baluyevsky, who was loyal to the Kremlin but had become an obstacle to a campaign launched by former President Vladimir Putin to tighten control over military spending. Baluyevsky and other top brass have clashed with Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, a onetime furniture store manager appointed by Putin early last year with a mandate to clean up the military's finances. While supporters said Putin appointed Serdyukov to cut waste and corruption in a military that mixes Communist-era management with acquisitive post-Soviet capitalism, critics said his brief is to ensure that the Kremlin controls the flow of money. Whatever the case, Baluyevsky got in the way. He "was in an open fight with the defense minister, a fight to resist his reforms, and he was kicked out," said Pavel Felgenhauer, an independent military analyst in Moscow. Medvedev softened the blow by giving Baluyevsky another job in Russia's elite, making him a deputy chairman of the presidential Security Council. He praised Baluyevsky and decreed that he be awarded an Order for Service to the Fatherland medal. Medvedev replaced Baluyevsky with a Serdyukov ally, General Nikolai Makarov. The changes were announced at a meeting at the Kremlin and were featured prominently in state-run television newscasts. Medvedev stressed that he was accepting Serdyukov's recommendation, seemingly warning his critics in the military that the Kremlin was behind him. "I received proposals from the defense minister on the appointment of a new" chief of the general staff, Medvedev said, his expression severe. He added: "I have studied these proposals and I support them." Generals have grumbled loudly in recent months over initiatives to sell off lucrative military land, move the navy's headquarters from Moscow to St. Petersburg, and use

civilians in support positions like legal and medical staff. Baluyevsky publicly criticized the proposed navy move, and as Russia's top military officer he was seen as the representative of disgruntled generals who deeply distrust Serdyukov. "The functions of the Defense Ministry and the general staff often intertwine, and when a new defense minister tries to pursue his policy, those who are unhappy with it gather around the chief of the general staff," Alexander Golts, a military analyst, said on Ekho Moskvyy radio. Medvedev's televised meeting also appeared aimed at underscoring his role as commander in chief, a job he assumed when he took over as president last month. Putin continues to wield major clout as prime minister and at times has overshadowed Medvedev, his hand-picked successor. Felgenhauer said, however, that Baluyevsky's dismissal was not a sign of any power struggle between Putin and Medvedev, but was probably a joint decision that was made this year but delayed until after Medvedev's inauguration. A career military officer, Makarov, 58, had been the commander of forces in Siberia before Putin named him the military's armaments chief in April 2007, two months after installing Serdyukov. Felgenhauer said Makarov's job was "to perform one of the key missions Serdyukov was given - to put some order into the Defense Ministry and its procurement program, where the Kremlin believed there was too much graft." While the reasons for the changes were largely internal, Baluyevsky's dismissal could lead to a decrease in Russian rhetoric targeting the West - though it is less likely to reflect a change in actual policy, which is in Kremlin hands. Baluyevsky has been among the more vocal critics of U.S. plans to deploy missile defense facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic, former Soviet satellite states in Europe, while Serdyukov has been quieter. But Putin and others have also strongly criticized the plans, and Baluyevsky's assertion that the intent was to weaken Russia's nuclear arsenal does not differ from the Kremlin line. "Baluyevsky is a very cautious person and he never has made any statements without the leadership's sanction," said Viktor Litovkin, a military analyst.

[Israel will certainly disappear: Ahmadinejad](#)

AFP – 4 June 2008

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad slammed aggressive US policy in the Middle East, while insisting that the state of Israel will "certainly" disappear. The hardline leader also taunted US President George W Bush, saying he was keen to attack Iran but would end his term in the White House without having done so after elections in November. "The United States (has) brought the Middle East nothing but threats, pressure and coercion," he told a press conference at a summit on the global food crisis. "Bush is very much interested in a military attack against Iran. Several times he has tried to find excuses for such an attack, but every time he has failed," he said at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) headquarters in Rome. "He's very eager for a war (but) he will actually bring his presidential term to an end with the grief of his failure," he said. In other comments he insisted that Tehran's nuclear program does not breach international law. "Our nuclear program is legal and transparent. We are not seeking more than our rights." The United States claims that the Islamic republic is using its civilian nuclear program as a front to conceal development of atomic weapons technology. Such development would notably be seen as a threat to Israel, whose existence Ahmadinejad has repeatedly called into question. He reiterated this view saying

that the demise of the Jewish state "will certainly happen and is something that is already happening, whether we are involved in it or not." In other comments the Iranian leader said there were "many reasons to think that the American elections would not be free". "Whoever is elected will have to end the occupation of other countries and abandon the spirit of intimidation which reigns across the world," he said, when asked which of the US presidential hopefuls he would choose.

DEFENCE ACQUISITION AND TECHNOLOGY

[Israel asks U.S. for 25 F-35 warplanes, at \\$80 million a unit](#)

Haaretz – 22 May 2008

Defense Minister Ehud Barak two weeks ago submitted a request to purchase 25 F-35 warplanes from the United States, at \$80 million a unit. The request also stipulates an option to obtain 50 more such warplanes in the future. The defense minister also requested three to five C-130J planes, which are the most advanced model of the Hercules jets the Israel Defense Forces has been using for many years. The decision to purchase the more updated models comes after two years of discussion, and was recently included in the framework of the IDF's multi-year plan, Tefen. According to the plan, Israel would acquire the first group of these fighter planes in 2014. Haaretz has learned that some senior defense officials have asked the Americans on multiple occasions about the possibility of supplying some of the planes even sooner than the target date, by mid-2012. IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi and the defense minister will make similar requests during their next visits to Washington. The F-35 warplane is manufactured by American defense contractor Lockheed Martin. It has advanced stealth capabilities, can strike planes and can intercept ground targets. In some formations, the plane can also take off and land vertically, like a helicopter. Lockheed Martin Vice President Bob Trice, who is visiting in Israel, said Thursday that U.S. government officials have informed the company of the request. He added that intends to assist Congress in any way he can during the approval process. The new Hercules plane is capable of carrying more cargo and can be operated by a smaller crew. It is equipped with advanced avionics and navigation systems, and costs \$50 million to \$60 million per unit. These planes will be supplied to Israel as part of the American financial aid package it receives. Lockheed Martin also manufactures the F-22 warplane, which is used by the U.S. Air Force. The F-22 is the most advanced warplane in the world and Israel has previously expressed interest in it. However, legislation in the U.S. Congress forbids the sale of the F-22 on the grounds that it would diminish the U.S. Air Force's advantage. Sources in Israel have expressed hope that U.S. President George W. Bush's recent visit to Israel would ensure the approval necessary to acquire the plane.

[European Fighter Boom](#)

Aviation Week – 28 May 2008

For a part of the world best known for reluctant and mostly stagnant defense spending, Europe is the setting for one rather unlikely, but extremely active, market. There has been

an explosion in the number of nations now looking for new combat aircraft. Away from the well-established programs for the Eurofighter Typhoon (in the UK, Germany, Italy, Spain and Austria), the Lockheed Martin F-35 (UK, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey) and Dassault's Rafale in France, Show News estimates there are more than 10 new competitive fighter requirements in various stages of resolution across Europe. Bob Kemp, Gripen International's sales and marketing director, cast his eye over the European situation for Show News and commented, "The activity out there is unbelievable, if you compare it with just four years ago. We have hit a 30-year roll-over point from the intensity of the Cold War. Each air force now wants a fighter in 2010, for the next 30-year cycle. It's as if every air force guy can only think in terms of zeros, and 30 years! Eighteen months ago Gripen had one active sales campaign, by our definition. Now it's six." The same is true for all the manufacturers competing for the current and emerging swathe of European requirements.

- Denmark & Norway: Alone among the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) international partner nations, Denmark and Norway insist they will run open competitions to select their next-generation F-16 replacement. Both countries have broadly similar requirements - each needs about 48 new jets - and both are following a similar timeline. Norway is slightly ahead, with a selection expected in late 2008 and a formal procurement announcement in early 2009. Denmark's decision is expected at the end of 2009. In Norway there is a straight fight between the Saab Gripen and Lockheed Martin's JSF. Earlier this year Eurofighter withdrew from the competition, expressing its dissatisfaction at the bid process. The Gripen and the JSF are also facing off in Denmark, where there has recently been an unsolicited bid from Boeing to include the Super Hornet. Boeing's offer is believed to be under evaluation, although it's not clear how it can be accommodated into the formal program. While the Netherlands remains steadfastly locked into its JSF plan, there is a slight possibility that outlook could change if either Norway or Denmark choose another option.
- Switzerland: The Swiss requirement is for an F-5E Tiger II replacement and a formal Request for Proposals (RfP) will be issued in July. Initial responses to a Request for Information (RfI) are already being thoroughly evaluated at an air force, industrial and governmental level. The Eurofighter Typhoon, Dassault Rafale and Saab Gripen are each in the running. Earlier this year Boeing withdrew the Super Hornet on the grounds that it exceeded the Swiss requirements by too wide a margin. Where that leaves the remaining twin-engined heavyweight contenders is anyone's guess. Switzerland is not expected to request a specific number of aircraft. Instead it will set out several operational scenarios and ask potential suppliers to meet them. This is quite a novel approach for a fighter buy and is expected to lead to an order for 20 to 30 aircraft. Switzerland will also impose noise and environmental constraints that will challenge the bidders. Later this summer a series of flight evaluations will be held in-country. Bidders will submit their best and final offers (BAFOs) in early 2009, with a contract anticipated in mid-2009.
- Romania: A decision on new aircraft is fast approaching in Romania. The national Armaments Directorate has completed its technical evaluations from a short-list of Saab Gripen and Lockheed Martin's F-16. Romania's selection process, described to Show News as "a detailed and far-reaching process, that evaluated suppliers and

operators and quietly got on with it" is expected to lead to an order for up to 48 aircraft, probably in two phases. On May 16, via the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Romania registered its potential interest in acquiring 24 F-16C/D Block 50/52s and 24 refurbished F-16C/D Block 25s (total package value up to \$4.5 billion/EUR2.85 billion). Gripen International has made equivalent offers, including a Gripen/Gripen NG package. Romania is believed to be looking for several financing options to make its acquisition possible. With elections due at the end of 2008 a fighter decision is expected either before the summer or otherwise in early 2009.

- **Croatia:** In April Croatia issued an RfI for the replacement of its 12 MiG-21 fighters. The RfI was issued to seven contenders - a longer list than even India's mighty fighter program. Potential bidders include the Dassault Mirage 2000-5, surplus Dassault Mirage F1 from a French supplier, Eurofighter Typhoon, Lockheed Martin F-16, surplus F-16s from Israel, MiG-29M (MiG-35) and Saab Gripen. A downselect is expected by the end of the summer with an RfP to be issued to two or three suppliers by late 2008/early 2009.
- **Greece:** The on-again-off-again saga of Greece's new fighter procurement is on again with a new RfP expected by the end of the summer. The Eurofighter Typhoon was previously selected to meet this requirement, but that deal was shelved - and the blame laid on the costs of the Athens Olympics. The Greek Air Force is now preparing a new procurement strategy proposal, and an international tender is expected. While Eurofighter enjoys an incumbent position, there is expected to be a renewed competition between the Typhoon, Super Hornet, Rafale, F-16, Gripen, perhaps the Su-30 plus the potential for the JSF to be offered further down the line.
- **The Rest of Europe:** Bulgaria is currently reassessing its procurement budgets and with a new defense minister now in place a fighter requirement is expected to become a priority. In 2009 Belgium is expected to issue an RfI for its F-16 replacement program. As a European Partner Air Force that opted not to join the JSF program, the Belgian approach to new fighter procurement will be watched with great interest. In Eastern Europe Slovenia should soon start discussions with NATO on how to fulfill its air defense requirements, and a new fighter purchase is possible. Serbia wants to follow a similar path of closer ties with the EU and NATO, and it too needs new aircraft. Looking slightly further ahead, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are examining their future fast jet needs, to perhaps bring new aircraft into service from 2012 to 2015. Finland also has an emerging requirement for an F/A-18C replacement around 2018/2020.

[HMS Superb nuclear submarine damaged in Red Sea crash](#)

The Telegraph – 28 May 2008

HMS Superb hit an underwater rock on Monday and damaged its sonar equipment, forcing it to surface. None of the crew was hurt and the submarine is watertight, an MoD spokesman said. Superb, a Swiftsure-class attack submarine with a crew of 112, hit an underwater pinnacle 80 miles south of Suez. The 272-

foot vessel had passed through the canal and was in the northern Red Sea when she grounded. No other vessel was involved. An MoD spokesman said the submarine's nuclear reactor was "completely unaffected" and there was "no environmental impact" from the collision. "There were no casualties and the submarine remains watertight, is safe on the surface and able to operate under her own power," he said. The vessel is in international waters but unable to dive because of the damage to sonar equipment. The Royal Navy is examining how to return the vessel to port and a full investigation is under way, with a Board of Inquiry to follow. The crew's next of kin are being informed, the MoD said. Last Friday the Telegraph reported on an official MoD inquiry which found that another nuclear submarine suffered £5 million damage after it crashed into the seabed because officers used tracing paper to plot her course. Travelling at 14 knots (about 16mph), the 5,000-ton Trafalgar submarine crashed 165ft below the surface in waters off the Isle of Skye, Scotland, in 2002. Its nuclear reactor was undamaged. Three crewmen were injured when the hunter-killer submarine turned into rocks because trainee commanders could not see vital symbols which had been covered by the paper. Senior officers supervising the course were criticised for serious lapses after the tracing paper was put over charts to prevent pen marks damaging the maps. The paper hid ocean bed contours and symbols which showed underwater current strengths. The boat's satellite navigating system had been turned off to increase the stress on the trainee captain during the examination nicknamed "Pressure Cooker". Post-It notes were also placed over other vital systems to simulate battle damage. The submarine required an 18-month refit when it finally limped back into the Faslane submarine base.

[STOVL F-35 completes last major step before first flight](#)

Flight Global – 28 May 2008

Hover pit tests completed two days ago moved the first short-takeoff-and-vertical-landing (STOVL) variant of the Lockheed Martin F-35 within days or weeks of its first flight. A Lockheed spokesman confirms the propulsion system for the STOVL demonstrator – named BF-1 – completed a series of conversions from conventional mode to vertical landing mode. The tests were conducted at Lockheed's hover pit, where the aircraft is tethered to the ground on top of a steel grate. The pit allows Lockheed's engineers to

measure vertical thrust generated by the engine. The hover pit is the last major stop before the first flight event for BF-1, which has been scheduled for late May or early June. Despite the need to complete hover pit tests before first flight, the lift-fan that helps power the aircraft during STOVL mode will not be engaged in a flight test for several more months. BF-1 will fly in conventional mode throughout the first flight. Getting the aircraft airborne has wider implications for Lockheed. The US Department of Defense has linked the release of production funding for the first batch of six F-35B low rate initial production (LRIP) aircraft to completing the first flight event. In addition, BF-1 is the first "weight-optimized" airframe produced after Lockheed re-designed all three variants in 2005 to reduce or offset weight by as much as 2,268kg (5,000lbs). The F-35B, on order by the US Marine Corps, the UK Royal Air Force and UK Royal Navy, is the first western aircraft to combine supersonic speed with the STOVL capability.

[Cluster bomb ban treaty approved](#)

BBC – 28 May 2008

More than 100 nations have reached an agreement on a treaty which would ban current designs of cluster bombs. Diplomats meeting in Dublin agreed to back an international ban on the use of the controversial weapons following 10 days of talks. But some of the world's main producers and stockpilers - including the US, Russia and China - oppose the move. Prime Minister Gordon Brown called it a "big step forward to make the world a safer place". He announced earlier that Britain would be taking cluster bombs out of service. The final draft of the treaty went before delegates from a total of 109 countries on Wednesday afternoon. Cluster bombs have been used in countries including Cambodia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Lebanon. They are made up of a big container which opens in mid-air, dropping hundreds of smaller individual sub-munitions, or "bomblets", across a wide area. Countries like the US, India, Pakistan and Israel claim such munitions are highly useful on the battlefield, but opponents say that where the bomblets fail to explode they leave a deadly legacy for civilians. During the conference, delegates have heard first-hand accounts from survivors of cluster bomb attacks. Speaking at Downing Street earlier, Mr Brown said: "I am delighted that the negotiations in Dublin have come to a successful conclusion and congratulate the Irish Government and all those involved. "I am confident that this agreement is in line with British interests and values, and makes the world a safer place." The BBC's Paul Adams said he understood the agreement would outlaw the two types of cluster munitions currently held by UK forces, but would not prevent countries from developing future generations of weapons based on the concept of sub-munitions. And he said it appeared the UK hoped other countries not present in Dublin, notably the US, might be persuaded to accept the treaty later. One stumbling block for the treaty could be the stockpile of cluster munitions the US military keeps at bases on British soil. The British representative in Dublin, John Duncan, said the UK would work with Washington to find a solution to the issue. But in a statement, the Pentagon stood firm, saying: "While the United States shares the humanitarian concerns of those in Dublin, cluster munitions have demonstrated military utility, and their

elimination from US stockpiles would put the lives of our soldiers and those of our coalition partners at risk." Some campaigners do believe countries like the US will change, however. They cite the landmine treaty of 1997 that was never signed by the US, Israel, Russia or China, yet those nations have not used landmines since it came into effect. Simon Conway, from the Cluster Munitions Coalition, said there would now be "massive" pressure on the US. "We think now that all of America's key allies have just renounced the weapon it will be very difficult for the US to engage in operations with countries who have banned this weapon and continue to use them," he said. Liberal Democrat foreign affairs spokesman Ed Davey said the prime minister must make clear whether he would continue to allow the US to store its own cluster munitions on British territory. "If he is serious about ending the scourge of these weapons, he must bring this abuse of the 'special relationship' to an end," Mr Davey said.

[British MoD accused of Chinook 'cock-up'](#)

BBC – 3 June 2008

The Ministry of Defence has been accused of a "gold standard cock-up" over eight helicopters which have cost £422m but have yet to fly for the RAF. Commons public accounts committee chairman Sir Edward Leigh said the Chinooks had been "languishing" while troops in Afghanistan needed aircraft. A National Audit Office report says a string of problems have seen their £259m cost soar since delivery in 2001. The MoD said it was trying to get the Chinooks operating as soon as possible. The helicopters, which are modified Mk3 Chinooks and were first ordered in 1995, are to be "reverted" to standard Mk2/2a models to get them to the field quicker. In the meantime, the MoD has added night-vision equipment to some of its standard Chinooks to enable them to carry out the sort of special forces missions the new Mk3s were intended for. But the NAO says the stop-gap fix has raised serious safety fears as staff say the equipment blocks pilots' vision. Defence Equipment Minister Baroness Taylor of Bolton said that the reversion of the Chinooks to the Mk2 configuration was one of several steps the MoD was taking to increase helicopter numbers in Afghanistan. She said: "The Chinook is the most capable support helicopter in Afghanistan. Based on operational need, the reversion project will allow delivery of more Chinooks to theatre in the shortest time-frame." Sir Edward, whose committee oversees the work of the NAO, strongly condemned the MoD's handling of the whole affair. He said: "The Ministry of Defence's programme to make airworthy the eight Chinook Mk3 helicopters, which it acquired in 2001 for special operations work, has been a gold standard cock-up. "Nearly seven years since they were delivered, the Chinook Mk3s are still languishing in climate-controlled hangers - despite the fact that they are desperately needed on operations in Afghanistan. "This is a very unhappy state of affairs, made more acute by the knowledge of how much our soldiers in the hostile terrain of Afghanistan need helicopter support." The aircraft were originally ordered by the MoD in 1995 at a cost of £259m. To make them suitable for special forces operations, they were configured as the hi-tech Chinook Mk3, equipped with extra "fat" fuel tanks, night-vision equipment and enhanced defensive aids. They were delivered in

2001 but have been beset by problems with their cockpit software. Deemed safe to fly only at altitudes above 500ft in clear conditions when the pilot could navigate by sight, they were useless for special forces work and so have been confined to special air-conditioned hangars in Wiltshire. In 2004, an NAO report described the purchase as "one of the worst examples of equipment procurement" it had seen. Efforts to rectify the problems were abandoned last year when the government decided it was more important to increase the number of basic helicopters available for operations in Afghanistan. The NAO says work to "revert" them to standard Mk2/2a Chinooks - the first of which should be delivered by December 2009 - is proceeding well, though the cost has soared from £53m to £90m. This is in addition to the £32m the MoD has spent on its stop-gap solution of fitting infrared night-screens to existing aircraft. The MoD says it has earmarked funds for resolving the safety fears associated with the screens but this will not be completed until after 2010.

[Manila to buy 10 military helicopters from Singapore](#)

Reuters – 4 June 2008

The Philippines is negotiating to buy ten second-hand combat helicopters from Singapore to beef up the military's efforts to defeat Muslim and communist rebels, a senior general said on Wednesday. The air force general, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters the government had allocated 400 million pesos (\$12.4 million) to buy the night-capable refurbished aircraft from Singapore in a commercial deal. 'This is not the first time we're entering into a deal with Singapore to acquire US-made UH-1H helicopters,' the general said, adding 20 similar single-engined aircraft had been transferred by Singapore in 2005. The Philippines has 40 helicopters, mostly second-hand, donated by the United States as part of military assistance to fight communist New People's Army rebels and Muslim militants with ties to JI. Last year, the government set aside nearly 8 billion pesos to acquire new attack helicopters and utility helicopters. The new armed forces chief, Lieutenant-General Alexander Yano, said the military's aging hardware was affecting its ability to defend its borders. 'To be frank with you, our capability as far as these aspects are concerned is a little deficient,' General Yano told reporters on Wednesday. 'We cannot really defend all these areas because of the lack of equipment.'

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

[Alarming Rise of Suicides Among Afghan Women](#)

VoA – 27 May 2008

Greater freedom for the women of Afghanistan was one of the promises of the 2001 U.S.-led invasion. U.S. and Afghan officials say there have been significant improvements, noting that some two million women and girls are now attending school, something that was forbidden under the extremist Taliban government. But despite Western efforts,

many Afghan women say their lives have not improved significantly and an increasing number of women are committing suicide by burning themselves to death as a way to escape physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Badly burnt and barely alive in a shabby Kabul hospital, a 15 year old girl lies in agony. The burn unit surgeon, Dr. Sarwani Sahab says these types of injuries are becoming more common among young Afghan women. "In Afghanistan, young girls, maybe from 18 to 35, is a big problem for self-burning here," said Dr. Sahab. The girl is from Kandahar province and insists she was burnt by a lantern but doctors believe it was a failed suicide attempt. They say her chance of survival is 50-50. This young girl's story is becoming increasingly common. An Afghan women rights group say that last year, almost 500 women chose death or disfigurement to a life of despair by setting themselves on fire to escape forced marriages, slavery or sexual and other types of abuse. For those who live through this form of suicide attempt, the scarring can be a death sentence in itself. The survivors who leave this ward cannot return home because of the shame they brought on their family. Some will live the rest of their lives on the streets or if they're lucky, they may find a safe house. There are other women who brave the wrath of society and try to help these young burn victims. Many risk their own lives to do so. Political activist, Malalai Joya is one of them and agreed to speak with VOA. She was elected as a member of the Afghan parliament in 2005 but was kicked out of government. She says it was because of her views. Security around Joya is tight, it has to be; she has survived four assassination attempts because of her fight for women's rights. "They burn themselves in many cases because they prefer to die than have this hell life," Joya. "It is so sad for me, it is impossible, I cannot find the words to show, to express my suffer, my sadness." But her work is having an impact. Razia is another burn victim. Razia gives only her first name. She says her failed suicide bid bought her freedom. She tells how a warlord from her village threatened to kill her if she did not allow him to marry her 13-year-old daughter. As a war widow, she had no one to protect her. Razia says she hoped if she died, an orphanage would take in her children. But she survived. A women's group found her in the hospital and offered her and her children a safe house. She says she was dead at that time, but God gave her a new life. Afghan officials are quick to point out that women now do have greater freedom and opportunities since the fall of the extremist Taliban regime. They say some two million women and girls are now getting an education - something that was forbidden under the Taliban. But, women's rights advocate Palwasha Hassan says not enough work has been done to help Afghan women. However, she says people should not lose heart. "I think we cannot lose this opportunity and say 'ok, in Afghanistan nothing can be changed because we have a traditional system and this and that.' You have to start from where you can so if this is the opportunity, it should not be missed," said Hassan. Abuse against women and suicide attempts to escape it are all too frequent problems in the strict traditional societies of South Asia and the Middle East. But, in Afghanistan, the ouster of the Taliban regime was supposed to change that. Many Afghan women are still waiting for that to happen.

MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

[Peacekeepers in Darfur are robbed in humiliating ambush](#)

IHT – 23 May 2008

Militiamen in Sudanese Army uniforms ambushed a convoy of Nigerian peacekeepers in Darfur on Wednesday, robbing them of cash and weapons, UN officials said Friday. No one was hurt in the attack, which took place near the regional capital of West Darfur, El Geneina, but it was nonetheless a humiliating blow to the hybrid United Nations and African Union peacekeeping force, which is struggling to prove it can do better than the African force it replaced. The hybrid force is expected to be the world's largest peacekeeping force, with 26,000 soldiers and police at full strength. But the deployment has been slowed by foot-dragging by the Sudanese government and bureaucratic delays, and so far only 9,000 troops are in place. "Everyone is asking, how can we protect anyone from these guys if we can't even protect ourselves," said a senior officer based in West Darfur who asked not to be identified. The convoy of peacekeepers was ambushed after it stopped at what appeared to be a Sudanese military checkpoint manned by four soldiers, according to a senior peacekeeping official. But the peacekeepers were quickly outnumbered and outgunned by about 60 men on horses and camels armed with automatic rifles and grenade launchers. The attackers wore military uniforms but were, according to peacekeeping officials, most likely janjaweed, militia members trained and armed by the government to fight rebels seeking greater autonomy in Darfur, a deeply poor and long-neglected province of western Sudan. "There were so many janjaweed they could not fight back," said a senior officer who works with the troops that were attacked. "It was really disheartening, but they had no choice." The attack came the same day as a fiery road accident in northern Nigeria killed 46 soldiers who had just returned from a peacekeeping deployment in Darfur. Peacekeepers in Darfur have struggled to protect civilians there. They have been deployed in the midst of a complex conflict that began five years ago when non-Arab tribes rose up against the Arab-dominated government to demand more local control and a greater share of Sudan's growing wealth. It has metastasized into a broad regional conflict drawing in a number of ethnic groups and spilling over into neighboring Chad. Sudan's multiple crises have boiled over in recent weeks. This month, a Darfur rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement, made a surprise attack on the capital, Khartoum, striking for the first time at the center of power in Sudan. At least 200 people were killed in the ensuing battle, and the group's ability to threaten the capital left many Sudanese shaken. Fierce fighting has erupted in the disputed oil town of Abyei, a flash point in the civil war that raged between northern and southern Sudan for two decades. The aid group Médecins Sans Frontières said 60,000 people had been forced to flee and live in the open at the height of the rainy season. Analysts and diplomats in the region worry that the conflict over Abyei, which sits along the dividing line between north and south, threatens to unravel the 2005 peace agreement that ended the civil war, one of Africa's longest and deadliest conflicts.

[Suicide blast hits NATO convoy in Afghan south](#)

Reuters – 25 May 2008

A suicide car bomber struck a NATO convoy near an alliance base in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar on Sunday, killing one local civilian, witnesses and a police officer said. Three NATO soldiers were wounded in the blast, a spokesman for the force

said. NATO soldiers cordoned off the site of the attack which happened near the house of the ousted Taliban's leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, currently used as a base for the alliance. Minutes after the attack, explosives attached to a bicycle went off in another part of the city, but caused no casualties. Violence has surged in Afghanistan since 2006, the bloodiest period since the Taliban's removal from power in 2001. More than 12,000 people have been killed during this period. The al Qaeda-backed Taliban, which leads an insurgency against the government and foreign troops stationed in Afghanistan, largely rely on suicide attacks and roadside bomb blasts. Separately on Sunday, a soldier from the U.S.-led force was killed in an operation in the western province of Farah, a U.S. military statement said.

[Troops 'ashamed' to wear Aussie uniform](#)

AAP – 27 May 2008

The exclusion of the Australian infantry from frontline conflicts, including in Iraq, has left many feeling "ashamed of wearing their Australian uniform", an army major says. Major Jim Hammett, who has served in East Timor, Iraq, Somalia and Tonga, also said the policy had exposed Australian troops to "near contempt" from other foreign soldiers now serving in Iraq, Fairfax reported on Tuesday. "In the opinion of many infantrymen, the lauding of their contributions to recent operations does not ring true," Major Hammett writes in the Australian Army Journal. "Many within its ranks suspect that the role of the infantry has already been consigned to history ... the ongoing inaction (in Iraq) ... has resulted in collective disdain and at times near contempt by personnel from other contributing nations for the publicity-shrouded yet force protected Australian troops." Major Hammett said the infantry, which makes up about a third of the army's combat forces, had not been assigned offensive actions since the Vietnam War despite steady overseas deployments since 2001. It was only Australia's special forces, including the SAS, that were sent on offensive operations, he said. "The restrictions placed on deployed elements as a result of force protection and national policies have, at times, made infantrymen ashamed of wearing their Australian uniform and regimental badge," Major Hammett wrote. "(They) have resulted in the widespread perception that our army is plagued by institutional cowardice." In a separate article cited by Fairfax, Captain Greg Colton, second in command of the Sydney-based 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, said infantry morale had deteriorated in the past 10 years as regular infantry units were given only "second-rate operational tasks". "There is a growing sense of frustration," Captain Colton wrote. "The government and army hierarchy seem to favour special forces for deliberate offensive operations and tasks ... at a lower level the diggers, NCOs and junior officers are starting to question the infantry's role and their part in it, which is having a tangible effect on morale."

[Report of children sex abuse by peacekeepers 'accurate': UN](#)

AP – 28 May 2008

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon expressed 'deep concern' on Tuesday after a leading children's charity said it had uncovered evidence of widespread sexual abuse of children at the hands of UN peacekeepers and international aid workers. The Save the Children UK report, based on field research in southern Sudan, the Ivory Coast and Haiti, describes a litany of sexual abuses committed against children, including some as young as six. The study is based on research, confidential interviews and focus groups conducted last year. The group emphasised it did not produce comprehensive statistics about the scale of abuse but did gather enough information to indicate the problem is severe. It said some children were denied food aid unless they granted sexual favours; others were forced to have sex or to take part in child pornography; many more were subjected to improper touching or kissing. 'The report shows sexual abuse has been widely under-reported because children are afraid to come forward,' Ms Jasmine Whitbread, chief executive of Save the Children UK, told Associated Press Television News. 'A tiny proportion of peacekeepers and aid workers are abusing the children they were sent to protect. It ranges from sex for food to coerced sex. It's despicable.' The report found that more than half the children interviewed knew of cases of sexual abuse and that in many instances children knew of 10 or more such incidents carried out by aid workers or peacekeepers. UN spokesman Michele Montas said at UN headquarters in New York that Mr Ban 'is deeply concerned' by the report. 'We welcome this report. It's fair and I think it's essentially accurate,' she said. Ms Montas noted that the report states that the UN has already undertaken a series of measures designed to tackle this problem directly, from establishing Conduct and Discipline Units in all UN missions to strengthening training regimes for all categories of UN personnel. She said the United Nations needs to strengthen its investigative capacity to better combat the problem. The Save the Children UK researchers, who met with 129 girls and 121 boys between the ages of 10 and 17, and also with a number of adults, found an 'overwhelming' majority of the people interviewed would never report a case of abuse and had never heard of a case being reported. The threat of retaliation, and the stigma attached to sex abuse, were powerful deterrents to coming forward, the report said.

[U.N. to pursue Darfur 'war criminals'](#)

CNN – 5 June 2008

A prosecutor for the International Criminal Court plans to brief the U.N. Security Council Thursday on efforts to try two men for war crimes committed in the Darfur region of Sudan. The court says the Sudanese government "has taken no steps to arrest" the men, who were indicted last year for war crimes and crimes against humanity. One of the men, in fact, is now in charge of humanitarian affairs for the Sudanese government -- a role that gives him power over how and whether aid agencies can deliver food, medicine and shelter to victims of chronic violence and deprivation in Darfur. The United States has characterized the crisis in Darfur as genocide. "He attacks the people he has the responsibility to protect," the International Criminal Court said in a statement. "He hampers the delivery of relief to the victims. He is involved in obstructing deployment of the peacekeepers." Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo is scheduled to give a progress

report to the Security Council on Thursday in the cases against Ahmad Harun, former minister of state for the interior in Sudan, and Ali Kushayb, a militia leader. Both face charges accusing them of murder, rape, forced displacement and other offenses. Harun is now Sudan's minister of state for humanitarian affairs. The allegations stem from a brutal counter-insurgency campaign the Sudanese government conducted after rebels began an uprising in the Darfur region of western Sudan in 2003. The authorities armed and cooperated with Arab militias that went from village to village in Darfur on a campaign of killing, torture and rape, according to the United Nations, western governments and human-rights organizations. The militias targeted civilian members of tribes from which the rebels draw strength. About 300,000 people have died in Darfur, the United Nations estimates, and 2.5 million have been forced from home. In 2005, the Security Council cleared the way for possible war-crimes prosecutions by the International Criminal Court, a permanent tribunal set up to handle prosecutions related to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The court is based on a treaty signed by 106 nations -- excluding Sudan. Prosecutors are investigating offenses in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and the Central African Republic. Once the court indicts someone, authorities in one country or another have the power to detain the indicted person for trial at the Hague. That has not happened in the case of Harun and Kushayb. An arrest warrant for Harun charges that he was involved in the murder, rape, torture and forced displacement of civilians. The court also says he encouraged such illegal acts in public speeches during his tenure as minister of state for the interior. The criminal court says Kushayb led several thousand militia members and personally participated in attacks against civilians. An arrest warrant outlines numerous cases of murder, rape and inhumane acts. In Sudan, however, senior government leaders told CNN that reports of atrocities in Darfur were exaggerated. "Yes, there has been a war and some people have died, but it's not like what has been reflected in the media," said Interior Minister Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid. Musa Halil, an adviser to Sudan's president, has been accused by the United States of leading a militia responsible for atrocities. And the U.N. Security Council has frozen his assets. Yet he denies any wrongdoing. "There is no genocide," he told CNN. "Most people came to the refugee camps because of the pressure and were used there for political marketing." Others told a different story. In Darfur, eyewitnesses spoke of government airplanes and helicopters attacking defenseless civilians just four months ago. They said the government struck in coordination with militiamen riding horses and camels -- a classic pattern that has unfolded around Darfur in recent years. More than 115 people were killed in that attack, they said, and nearly 58,000 people fled.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[Iran nuclear arms research 'serious concern'](#)

Reuters – 27 May 2008

Iran's alleged research into nuclear warheads remains a matter of serious concern and Teheran should provide more information on its missile-related activities, the United Nations nuclear watchdog said. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) also said on Monday, in its latest report on Iran, that Teheran was holding back information

on high-explosives testing relating to its nuclear programme. It said Teheran had 3,500 uranium enrichment centrifuges working at its Natanz nuclear facility, slightly more than earlier this year, and a few more advanced centrifuges were also being tested. The IAEA has been pressing Teheran for answers to Western intelligence allegations that Iran has covertly studied how to design atomic bombs. Iran has dismissed the intelligence as baseless, forged or irrelevant. Iran's research into 'high explosives testing and the missile re-entry vehicle project remained a matter of serious concern', said the report, which will be passed on to the United Nations Security Council. 'Substantive explanations are required from Iran to support its statements on the alleged studies and on other information with a possible military dimension,' the agency said, though it added that it had not detected any actual use of nuclear material in connection with the alleged studies. 'We have not got substantive answers and we could have gotten those earlier,' a senior UN official said. The next step is up to Teheran and to the IAEA board of governors, which meets next week in Vienna, he said. 'They (Iran) know what we need, everything is listed here that we need, the questions are clear...we need answers.' Mr Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's ambassador to the agency, said the IAEA report showed that Teheran's nuclear programme was peaceful, Iran's semi-official Fars News Agency reported. The report 'shows Iran's entire nuclear activities are peaceful,' Fars quoted him as saying. 'Once more it has been explicitly underlined that there has been absolutely no evidence regarding the diversion of Iran's nuclear activities or materials toward military purposes,' he said.

[McCain calls for talks with Russia on nuclear arms in Europe](#)

IHT – 27 May 2008

Senator John McCain distanced himself Tuesday from the administration of President George W. Bush by vowing to work more closely with Russia on nuclear disarmament and by calling for a reduction in tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. The presumptive Republican Party presidential nominee proposed that the two countries seek a new arms control accord while reducing their nuclear arsenals "to the lowest number possible, consistent with our security requirements and global commitments." In what his campaign promoted as a major speech, McCain told a crowd at the University of Denver that he supported a legally binding accord between the two nations to replace verification requirements in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or Start, which expires in 2009. The Bush administration has refused to accept such binding limits on nuclear weapons, a stance that the administration's critics say has created deep concern in Moscow. "Russia and the United States are no longer mortal enemies," McCain said, and they had "a special responsibility" to reduce their nuclear arsenals. He also advocated a tough-sounding approach on North Korea's nuclear program, saying that it should be "completely, verifiably and irreversibly ended." McCain's speech signaled a more open approach toward multilateralism and nuclear cooperation than the world has come to expect from the current administration. The Arizona senator called, for instance, for a strengthening of international treaties and institutions to combat proliferation. Like his Democratic rivals, Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama, McCain said he favored the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, though calling this "a distant and difficult goal." Obama called in October for such an objective.

[Missile-related shipment to Syria stopped, U.S. says](#)

Reuters – 28 May 2008

Four countries last year prevented Syria from receiving equipment that could be used to test ballistic missile components, a senior U.S. official said on Wednesday. U.S. national security adviser Stephen Hadley described the previously undisclosed incident in a speech to members of the Proliferation Security Initiative, a network of countries that seeks to stop illicit weapons of mass destruction shipments. The Bush administration has portrayed the PSI effort, which was launched five years ago and has more than 90 nations as members, as a significant success in its drive to prevent biological, chemical or nuclear terrorism. Analysts say it is hard to judge its effectiveness because members are reluctant to disclose successes to avoid betraying sources that provide intelligence needed to stop shipments. "One example of its success occurred in February 2007, when four nations represented in this room worked together to interdict equipment bound for Syria -- equipment that could have been used to test ballistic missile components," Hadley said at a conference to mark PSI's fifth anniversary. "Interdictions like this one have been successful all over the world -- and have stopped many shipments of sensitive materials destined for Iran, North Korea, and Syria," he said, providing no further details. The United States in April released photographs of what it said was a Syrian nuclear reactor built with North Korean help. Israel destroyed the reactor in a September 6 air strike that was initially shrouded in secrecy out of what U.S. officials said was fear that its disclosure could prompt Syrian retaliation. Syria has denied the facility was a nuclear reactor.