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CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

[Afghanistan costs hit Dutch defence spending](#)

Janes' International Defence Review - 31 August 2007.

The Netherlands has become the latest NATO member state to note that unexpectedly high long-term costs of peace-enforcement and peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan are putting major defence acquisition projects in jeopardy. First to be hit is the Royal Netherlands Navy. At the end of August, Defence Secretary Eimert van Middelkoop revealed that the construction of four offshore patrol vessels (OPV) will be delayed by a year and the planned replacement of the replenishment vessel HrMs Zuiderkruis with a 26,000 ton Joint Logistics Support Ship (JLSS) by 2011 has been postponed by three years. The delay to these two naval projects follows a previously announced round of cuts across all three services noted in the Hoofdlijnennotitie report published by the Dutch Ministry of Defence (MoD) in July.

[Thousands more civilians flee new clashes in eastern DR Congo, UN reports](#)

United Nations - 4 September 2007

Thousands of Congolese civilians are on the move in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) strife-torn North Kivu province, fleeing their homes amid reports of renewed fighting, cases of rape, and rising tensions between Government forces, renegade troops and rebel groups, the United Nations refugee agency reported today. "We fear that the pursuit of a military solution to the problems in North Kivu would further worsen the province's humanitarian crisis through the potential displacement of hundreds of thousands of additional Congolese civilians," UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesman Ron Redmond told a news briefing in Geneva. "We again call on all parties to the conflict in North Kivu to refrain from direct attacks and atrocities against the civilian population, and displaced people in particular." Voicing deep concern, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on the Government and all local stakeholders to persevere in their efforts to bring about a peaceful solution.

[Iraqis fail US Congress targets](#)

BBC - 5 September 2007

The Iraqi government is "dysfunctional" and has failed to meet 11 of 18 key benchmarks set by the US, according to a non-partisan Congressional watchdog. Political progress in Iraq has been unsatisfactory and violence "remains high", a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found. Iraq has met three benchmarks and partially met another four, it says. The report came as the most senior US commander in Iraq suggested that he may recommend a reduction in troops.

[Report: Al Qaeda Plans New Iraq Offensive](#)

CBS News - 5 September 2007

Sunni insurgent coalition that includes al Qaeda in Iraq said Tuesday it was forming several battalions to intensify suicide attacks against U.S. and Iraqi government targets. The warning came as Iraq's parliament got back to work after a month-long summer break, but it was not immediately clear whether lawmakers would quickly take up key benchmark legislation demanded by Washington. In a statement posted on an Islamic Web site, the Islamic State of Iraq said the "War Ministry" decided to form special battalions for martyrdom seekers "to pound the bastions of the crusaders and their renegade tails" in Iraq.

[Canadians vigilant as Ramadan begins with Taliban threat in Afghanistan](#)

Canadian Press - 14 September 2007

The Muslim holy month of Ramadan began Thursday in Afghanistan with a reported call from the Taliban for increased attacks on international forces. Canadian troops say they are prepared for the worst but won't curb any planned operations because of the threat. Lt. Derrick Farnham, spokesman for the Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team at Kandahar Airfield, said the threat may be increased at a time when the Taliban are trying to convince insurgents to die as suicide bombers. "It could be a time that's utilized by the insurgents to be more aggressive, so we will prepare for that worst-case scenario," Farnham said. Indeed, according to an unsourced report by the Al-Jazeera news network, the Taliban have said it will launch a new operation during the holy month involving suicide bombings, ambushes and other attacks.

[Afghanistan 'sliding further into war'](#)

Herald Sun (Australia) - 14 September 2007

Afghanistan is sliding ever further into conflict with more than half of the country affected and several regions out of reach of humanitarian aid, a senior international Red Cross official warned today. "The conflict is clearly spreading and in certain areas also intensifying," said Reto Stocker, head of the Afghan delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "Today, more than half of Afghanistan is mildly to very strongly affected by the conflict," he said. Increasing numbers of people are being displaced from their homes as a result of the conflict between the Afghan government and international allies on one side, and the Islamist Taliban militia on the other. Mr Stocker said that security was so bad that many parts of the country are "no-go areas" for aid workers.

COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Amnesty For Rebels](#)

Stratfor – 4 September 2007

In the hopes of ending a 40-year communist insurgency, the Philippine government will soon proclaim amnesty for members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, AHN reported Sept. 4, citing Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Jesus Dureza. No date has been set for the proclamation, but President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has set aside \$10.8 million to assist in the social integration of the rebels.

[Danish police arrest Al Qaeda-linked suspects](#)

ABC - 4 September 2007

Police and intelligence agents in Denmark have arrested eight people suspected of preparing to carry out an act of terrorism. The suspects have not been identified, but were arrested in and around Copenhagen. According to the head of the police intelligence service, all of those arrested were what he termed "militant Muslims" between the ages of 19 and 29 and part of a cell which he said had links to leading members of Al Qaeda. The group had been under surveillance for some time, he said, but the authorities had decided to act now because it was believed that those arrested had been working with unstable explosives in a heavily populated Copenhagen district. There are no immediate details of where the police believe an attack was to take place.

[The Terrorism Index](#)

Foreign Policy - September/October 2007

Americans are thinking more about the war on terror than ever before. But that doesn't mean they've come to see this issue in the black-and-white terms preferred by many elected leaders. The combination of bloody wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, continued terrorist attacks from Britain to Somalia, and a presidential election in which candidates are defining themselves based on how they would stare down the threats has many seeing shades of gray. Six years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, just 29 percent of Americans believe the United States is winning the war on terror—the lowest percentage at any point since 9/11. But Americans also consider themselves safe. Six in 10 say that they do not believe another terrorist attack is imminent. Likewise, more than 60 percent of Americans now say that the decision to invade Iraq was a mistake. Yet around half report that they would support similar military action to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon

[Talking to al Qaeda? Don't rule it out, some say](#)

Reuters – 13 September 2007

Six years after the September 11 attacks, a few cautious voices are beginning to suggest the unthinkable -- maybe it is time to consider talking to al Qaeda. The idea will revolt

some people and raises obvious questions -- through what channels could such a dialogue take place and what would there be to negotiate? But proponents say al Qaeda has established itself as a de facto power, whether the West likes it or not, and history shows militant movements are best neutralized by negotiation, not war.

[Austria arrests three suspected Al-Qaeda activists](#)

AFP - 13 September 2007

Austrian authorities detained three suspected Al-Qaeda activists Wednesday in connection with a videotape threat against Austria and Germany for their role in Afghanistan, officials said. Interior Minister Guenther Platter told a news conference that the two men, aged 20 and 26, and a 21-year-old woman were "in contact with Al-Qaeda networks" but did not form an "operational group" planning violence. "At no time did they represent a threat against Austria," he said, adding that they were still being questioned. Public security chief, Erich Buxbaum, said the three, all resident in Vienna, were second-generation Austrian Muslims whose families came from the Arab world. "It was a conspiratorial network but we have no concrete evidence of planned terrorist attacks in Austria or elsewhere," he said. Nevertheless, wiretaps carried out before the arrests allegedly revealed discussion on how to handle explosives, he added.

[With U.S. backing, abu Risha rose from young clan leader to head of Sunni fight against al-Qaida](#)

AP - 13 September 2007

Visitors often streamed into Abdul-Sattar Abu Risha's heavily secured compound: local residents, tribal chiefs and U.S. military officers — a sign of the young clan leader's swift rise to become the lynchpin of the American strategy of turning Iraq's Sunni tribes against al-Qaida. But his position brought him enemies and rivals. Al-Qaida in Iraq tried several times to kill him, and some Sunnis saw him as an opportunist, taking American cash to build himself up. His importance to the U.S. was made clear by a Sept. 3 meeting with President George W. Bush. On a surprise visit to Anbar province, Bush posed for photos with Abu Risha, who cut the figure of an Arab prince, with an immaculate gold-rimmed robe and a meticulously groomed goatee and a heavy mustache. Abu Risha — in his late 30s — was killed 10 days later along with two bodyguards by a roadside bomb near his compound in the Anbar capital of Ramadi.

DEFENCE STRATEGY

[Dropping into Iraq](#)

The Economist - 3 September 2007

As a piece of political theatre, one could not help admiring it. Without any warning George Bush popped up in Iraq on Monday September 3rd, accompanied by his defence secretary, Robert Gates, his secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, as well as the commander of America's forces in Iraq, for a meeting with the country's prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki. The choice of venue was significant. It took place in an American airbase some 120 miles (around 180km) west of Baghdad, in the heart of Anbar province. Until a few months ago such a trip would have been extremely risky if not impossible: Anbar was the crucible of the Sunni uprising against America's presence in Iraq, and as dangerous a spot as you could find anywhere in the country. Mr Bush's trip was designed to emphasise his claims that the "surge" of some 30,000 extra troops into Iraq—the reinforcements were directed at Baghdad, its periphery and at Anbar—is finally starting to show results.

[China's Defense Minister Goes To Tokyo and Manila](#)

Virtual Information Center - 12 September 2007

At the behest of then Japanese Defense Minister Koike and in a sign of improving relations, China's Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan conducted the first visit to Japan by a Chinese defense minister in over nine years, meeting with his newly installed counterpart Masahiko Komura. Hot topics of discussion included the Taiwan issue, top level defense exchanges, enhanced security cooperation, and a defense hotline. Ending the discussions by signing a joint communiqué, Cao promoted Beijing's continuing proposition that China's rising military posed no threat, while Komura renewed the call for China to lift the veil of its rapidly growing military machine and become openly transparent to the rest of an inquisitive world. In the Philippines, Cao offered the Armed Forces of the Philippines limited aid, which appeared to have more political than military ramifications, and may have been an attempt by China to test the strength of the U.S.-Philippine alliance.

[Petraeus plans give new life to Republicans](#)

MSNBC - 13 September 2007

General David Petraeus's cautiously optimistic assessment of improving security conditions in Iraq this week has invigorated Republicans and focused attention on Democratic divisions. The general's recommendation for the withdrawal of more than 20,000 US troops by next summer, starting with a Marine unit this month, is as much a matter of necessity as choice because of a shortage of troops to keep the "surge" going next year. But it has helped reshape the political debate in favour of Republicans.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[China's Revolution in Military Affairs](#)

S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies - August 2007

China is currently engaged in a determined effort to transform its military from an army based on Mao Zedong's principles of mass-oriented, infantry-heavy "People's War," to an agile, high-technology force capable of projecting power throughout the Asia-Pacific. A corollary to this assertion is that this modernization process is nothing less than a larger effort by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to engage in a "revolution in military affairs" (RMA) that will revolutionize the way it fights. Certainly it is true that the PLA is in the midst of perhaps the most ambitious upgrading of its combat capabilities since the early 1960s, and that it is adding both quantitatively and qualitatively to its arsenal of military equipment. But is it an RMA? Probably not, but that may not matter.

[US to open up on secret military technology to Australia](#)

AFP - 5 September 2007

The United States agreed to grant its ally Australia greater access to top-secret military technology Wednesday under a deal signed by US President George W. Bush. Bush, who is in Australia for an Asia-Pacific summit, said the treaty would enhance military cooperation between the countries as they work towards common goals in Iraq and Afghanistan where both have troops. "It helps cut through the bureaucracy so that we can transform our forces better, share technology better and, frankly, enable our private sectors to work together to develop new defence capabilities to defend ourselves," Bush told a press conference in Sydney. The US-Australia Defence Trade Cooperation Treaty permits the licence-free export of defence goods between the countries and simplifies processes for sharing equipment, information and technology. The US signed a similar agreement with the UK in June.

[Possible French sale to Pakistan could see military technology fall into Chinese hands](#)

AP - 13 September 2007

Pakistan is seeking to buy missiles and radar from France for a fighter plane that it is developing jointly with China, according to the respected defense publication, Jane's. Experts say such a sale would carry a risk of the technology falling into Chinese hands, circumventing a European arms embargo on China. Pakistan is talking to France about getting air-to-air missiles from the MBDA company and radars from Thales for its JF-17 fighter, Jane's Defense Weekly said. Those missiles and similar radars also equip Taiwan's French-built Mirage fighters, defenses that could be compromised if Pakistan transfers the technology to China, according to Jane's. If Pakistan lets Chinese engineers look at the technology, as reports say it did with U.S. military equipment in the past, then such a sale would also circumvent an EU ban on arms sales to China that has been in place since the Chinese military crushed pro-democracy protests in 1989.

ENERGY SECURITY

[Green light for fusion project](#)

The Times (UK) - 3 September 2007

A British-led team of scientists has won European Union approval to seek to make nuclear fusion, the physicist's dream, a reality. Nuclear fusion has the potential to solve the world's energy crisis with carbon-neutral technology by harnessing the process that drives the Sun. So far, decades of research have generated little more than hype. The energy needed to stoke the vast temperatures at which such reactions can occur still outweighs the energy they produce, and supposed breakthroughs such as "cold fusion" have turned out to be false dawns. Physicists joke that they have been predicting the technology is "30 years away" for the past 30 years.

[US and Vietnam agree to work together on peaceful nuclear energy](#)

AP - 12 September 2007

The United States and Vietnam have agreed to work together on efforts to use nuclear energy peacefully, U.S. officials said. The U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration said it would help Vietnam as the country prepares to develop civilian nuclear power. The accord with Vietnam was signed last month. William Tobey, an official with the administration, said Wednesday that the arrangement will help Vietnam use civilian nuclear energy while reducing the possible spread of nuclear technology. The U.S. said scientists from U.S. national laboratories will collaborate with Vietnamese technical officials on reactor safety, radioactive waste disposal and other measures.

[Reaction time: climate change and the nuclear option](#)

ABC News - 14 September 2007

The Fox Report of 1977, on the proposed Ranger uranium mine, made the telling point that nuclear power, while it had been relatively safe and clean until that time as a means of generating electricity, had two fundamental problems: it produced radioactive waste that would need to be stored for immensely long periods, and it provided fissile material that could be diverted to produce weapons. The report argued that it would be irresponsible to contribute to a worsening of these problems without convincing evidence that they had been solved, or were at least likely to be.

MILITARY OPERATIONS

[UK military operation in Iraq defended](#)

Financial Times (UK) - 31 August 2007

British military operations in southern Iraq were defended on Friday by the government, which is seeking to face down growing US criticism that UK forces have failed in Basra. Amid signs that Britain's plans to lessen its presence in southern Iraq are causing irritation in Washington, Des Browne, the defence secretary, and David Miliband, foreign secretary, said Basra province would be judged "in months" to be fit for transfer to full Iraqi control.

[Somalia: Military Operations in Bakara Bazaar Come to an End](#)

Shabelle Media Network (Mogadishu) - 11 September 2007

Military officials from the TFG have said that they had ended up the military operations being conducted in Bakara, the main market in Somalia. The government troops along with Ethiopian forces beefed up at Bakara market and its surrounding areas early on Tuesday morning, in what they called an operation to search illegal weapons inside Bakara market. A police spokesman, Abdi Wahid Mohammed Hussein told Shabelle Radio that the govt. forces accompanied by Ethiopian troops have cordoned all roads leading to Bakara market after they have received information indicating that there were illegal arms and explosive things in Bakara. The Govt. forces ended up their operations aimed at seizing illegal arms inside Bakara after they had successfully conducted the operations, Said the police spokesman.

[Ramadan starts; operations vs Sayyaf continue](#)

Sun Star (Philippines) - 14 September 2007

Military operations against the Abu Sayyaf will continue despite the start of the holy month of Ramadan Thursday. Colonel Benito de Leon, spokesman of the Army's 10th Infantry Division, said there will be no let up in their operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group and other lawless groups in their area of responsibility. But he was quick to add that it is another story for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which has an existing ceasefire agreement with the government. De Leon said the ceasefire agreement with the MILF is still holding and in fact more strengthened in their recent meeting with the International Monitoring Team.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[North Korea to Disable All Nuclear Programs](#)

AP - 3 September 2007

North Korea has agreed to declare and disable all its nuclear facilities by the end of this year, the chief U.S. negotiator said Sunday. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said two days of talks between the United States and North Korea in Geneva had been "very good and very substantive" and would help improve chances of a successful meeting later this month with Japan, Russia, South Korea and China in six-nation talks aimed at ending the North's nuclear weapons program and improving relations between North Korea and other countries.

[Iran 'reaches nuclear target'](#)

CNN - 3 September 2007

Iran has reached its long-sought goal of running 3,000 centrifuges to enrich uranium for its nuclear program, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced Sunday in a report on state media. The U.N. Security Council had threatened a third round of sanctions against the country if it did not freeze the uranium enrichment program -- which Iran maintains is for peaceful energy purposes, but the U.S. says is to hide a weapons program. "The West thought the Iranian nation would give in after just a resolution, but now we have taken another step in the nuclear progress and launched more than 3,000 centrifuge machines, installing a new cascade every week," the state television Web site quoted Ahmadinejad as saying.

[U.S. warned N. Korea not to help Syria with nukes](#)

Haaretz Correspondents and News Agencies - 13 September 2007

United States President George W. Bush warned North Korea last year against transferring nuclear material to Syria, Iran or a terrorist organization, saying such a move would be perceived as a "grave threat," a former U.S. official recently told Haaretz. In a telephone conversation, the former U.S. ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, said North Korea may be using Syria and Iran as "safe havens" for its nuclear activity.