



RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE 17/2008

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15 August 2008

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Articles from subscriber only sites are available on request. Révolutionnaire is edited by Ong Weichong, 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

British Muslims aid Taliban in attacks on UK soldiers in Afghanistan

The Times – 2 August

British Muslims are actively supporting the Taliban and al Qaida in attacks on UK soldiers, the former commander of Britain's forces in Afghanistan said today. Brigadier Ed Butler, 46, claimed his troops also uncovered evidence that militant Islamic groups in Helmand Province are suspected of assisting terrorist plots in the UK.

Earlier this year suspicions were raised that the Taliban were recruiting an increasing number of fighters from Britain after RAF experts overheard secret transmissions spoken in broad Midlands and Yorkshire accents.

At the end of the week that saw the toll of British soldiers killed in Afghanistan reach 114, Brig Butler said a growing number of British-born Muslims were assisting the Taliban. He said: "There are British passport holders who live in the UK who are being found in places like Kandahar. "There is a link between Kandahar and urban conurbations in the UK. This is something the military understands, but the British public does not."

Brig Butler, who led British troops in Helmand Province for six months and has served in conflict zones including the Balkans, Iraq, Africa and Northern Ireland, described the operation in Helmand as "the most challenging mission I have done in my career". Widely regarded as one of the best British officers of his generation, he announced his decision to retire from the Army earlier this year.

Despite claims his premature retirement was in protest at the Government's under-funding of the armed forces, Brig Butler insisted his decision to step down was prompted by the desire to spend more time with his family. He is currently Commander of Joint Force Operations based at Northwood, near London, and will formally leave the Army next year.

British troops have been warned to expect to be toiling through the desert plains and mountain passes of Afghanistan for years to come because of the resurgent Taliban. In the last two months 17 British soldiers have been killed in the country but politicians and commanders alike agree that there can be no early exit for UK forces.

The British ambassador Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles even suggested last year that a British presence may be needed in the country for another 30 years - although he hastily clarified his remarks to make clear that he was not necessarily talking about a full-scale military force.

Court blocks Philippine land deal

BBC – 4 August

The Philippines' Supreme Court has blocked the signing of a territorial deal between the government and Muslim separatists in the south of the nation. The two sides were due to formalise a deal on Tuesday widening an existing Muslim autonomous region. But the court acted after Catholic lawmakers from the region said they had not been adequately consulted.

Rebels from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front have been fighting for self-rule in the southern Philippines for years. The agreement was intended to kick-start peace talks aimed at ending nearly four decades of conflict.

In late June, the two sides agreed that a six-province Muslim autonomous region on the island of Mindanao would be expanded to include 712 villages, subject to the agreement of villagers in a vote. But some Catholic lawmakers fear such a move could lead to more sectarian violence, and there have been large rallies against the agreement. "Do not build a Berlin Wall among the people in Mindanao," Celso Lobregat, mayor of the mainly Catholic city of Zamboanga, told a 10,000-strong crowd.

The court has now temporarily suspended the deal and ordered the government to make its case at a hearing on 15 August. The deal remains controversial. Supporters, including President Gloria Arroyo, say it is badly needed to help end a war that has cost more than 100,000 lives and left the southern Philippines mired in poverty, says the BBC's Michael Barker in Manila. But critics say the agreement is tantamount to allowing the establishment of an independent state within the country, something that is outlawed by the constitution, our correspondent adds.

Czechs plan to deploy more troops in Afghanistan

IHT – 4 August

The Czech Defense Ministry says it plans to increase the number of its troops in Afghanistan by about 200 next year. Ministry spokesman Jan Pejsek says the number of Czech troops serving in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force could reach some 600 in 2009. Pejsek said Monday the plan needs full government approval in September or October. Parliament also needs to approve the deployment.

The Czech parliament approved the deployment of up to 415 Czech servicemen in NATO's peacekeeping force in Afghanistan this year. A separate unit of 100 elite troops should continue to serve next year in Afghanistan with the U.S.-led operation against al-Qaida and Taliban fighters, Pejsek said.

[US adds 26 days to Marines' tours in Afghanistan](#)

Khaleej Times – 5 August

More than 1,200 Marines deployed to train Afghan security forces have had their tours of duty extended by 26 days, the Marine Corps said. Col. Dave Lapan said the Marines from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment will now remain in Afghanistan until Nov. 30. The Pentagon is also sending nearly 200 new support troops including helicopter units and teams specializing in clearing routes and disposing of explosives.

A defense spokesman had said earlier on Monday that the Marines were from the 27th Marine Expeditionary Unit and that their tours had been extended by 30 days. Extended Marine tours come amid U.S. concern about rising violence in Afghanistan from the Taliban and other groups, including militants that U.S. military officials say are being trained and equipped at safe havens in neighboring Pakistan.

U.S. forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and toppled the Taliban government after the Sept. 11 attacks. Last month, the Pentagon issued a one-month extension for some 2,200 Marines who deployed for combat duty in March from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit. That extended their stay from October to November.

[Taliban threaten suicide bombings in Pakistan](#)

Washington Post – 5 August

A Taliban spokesman on Tuesday warned Pakistan's government to end a military crackdown against insurgents in a restive northwestern mountain valley or face suicide bombings. Maulvi Umar said the government has run out of time and must stop the current military operation in the Swat Valley, where the army says bloody clashes this week have left 125 dead. "Our ultimatum has ended. Now they have made a strike and it is our turn to strike whether it will be tomorrow, the day after tomorrow or whenever," Umar told a news conference in a village mosque in Bajur tribal region bordering Afghanistan guarded by more than 100 heavily armed militants.

Umar is spokesman for Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, an umbrella organization of militant groups led by Baitullah Mehsud, the country's top Taliban leader. Umar spoke jointly with Maulana Faqir Mohammed, a cleric who is suspected by Pakistani intelligence of ties with al-Qaida No. 2 leader Ayman al-Zawahri. In comments apparently intended to reflect public enthusiasm for the Taliban's armed struggle, Mohammed claimed they have received requests from a large number of women to be trained for suicide attacks.

The violence has erupted in Swat despite a peace agreement between a pro-Taliban cleric, Mullah Fazlullah, and the provincial government reached in May. Under the pact, militants agreed to recognize the government's authority and halt attacks in return for the release of prisoners and government concessions on implementation of Islamic law. Umar accused the government of violating the accord. He threatened suicide bombings and other attacks targeting the government and senior officials.

A provincial government spokesman was not immediately available to comment on the militant threat. Authorities say more than 60 girls schools have been set on fire in recent weeks and security forces attacked. On Saturday, nine police and paramilitary troops were killed in a bombing on a bridge. Many observers say the lull in hostilities that followed the May peace deal has allowed militants who were targeted in a major military offensive late last year to regroup. The army said Tuesday that since the latest security operation began July 30, 11 troops, 20 civilians and 94 militants have died. It was not possible to confirm that toll independently.

Meanwhile in Bajur, a clash between security forces and militants left one paramilitary soldier dead Tuesday. The shootout broke out after troops resisted militants who were trying to occupy a security post in Arrang, a village east of the region's main town of Khar, said Fazal Rabi, a local senior security official.

[Hamas warns of uprising against Fatah in West Bank](#)

AP – 5 August

A senior Hamas official warned Tuesday the militant group that took over Gaza a year ago could also overrun the West Bank if it is provoked by rival Fatah. Tensions between the Palestinian factions remained high after a bombing last week that killed five Hamas members in Gaza, which was blamed on Fatah. A Hamas sweep in Gaza over the weekend left 11 dead and dozens injured, most of them from Fatah.

The Hamas official, Sami Abu Zuhri, told The Associated Press that Fatah, which rules the West Bank, should expect "an uprising" against them if they continued a crackdown against Hamas there. As the conflict has intensified, Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank have rounded up dozens of political opponents and there have been growing reports of beatings and mistreatment of detainees by both sides.

Abu Zuhri said the crackdown on Hamas would not break the movement, but would bring "the opposite result." "It will lead to what will appear like an uprising against the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank," he warned. Abu Zuhri said his movement was not actively planning for a military takeover, but it was an option. "If arrests continue, they will lead to unforeseen responses, whether from resistance fighters or the people," he said. Abu Zuhri's interview with The AP reflected Hamas' increasingly tough stance toward Fatah after it routed the Fatah-linked Hilles clan in Gaza City over the weekend. The Hamas sweep underscored the group's tight control over Gaza.

A West Bank Fatah official responded that Hamas was issuing empty threats. "If they can do anything, let them do it. We are not afraid," said Fahmi Zaarir, a spokesman for Fatah in the West Bank.

After Hamas expelled Fatah forces from Gaza in June 2007, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah set up a rival government in the West Bank. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 but maintains a large military presence and overall security control in the West Bank.

[MoD 'slow to appreciate' potential of drone aircraft in Iraq and Afghanistan, MPs say](#)

Telegraph – 5 August

The Ministry of Defence has been accused of being "slow to appreciate" the potential that unmanned drones had in beating the insurgencies faced by the military in Afghanistan and Iraq, a report by MPs says. With the ability to lurk unseen for hours over enemy positions and destroy them with missiles the "battle winning capabilities" of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) were not being realised, the Commons Defence Committee said in a report.

While the American military very rapidly took on UAV technology with hundreds of aircrafts now being used the British still only have a handful on operations. British commanders have praised the American-made Reaper drone as a major asset in "decapitating" Taliban commanders in surgical strikes but the RAF only have three of the aircraft and one of those crashed earlier this year.

Troops were also being handicapped by a major shortfall of 48 per cent of UAV operators although the MoD insisted this had no impact on operational theatres. "The MoD must address the manning deficits in these areas in order to gain the maximum value from its current and future UAV systems," the MPs said.

The drones were highly effective on operations but "there are a wide range of challenges... which have to be addressed in order to exploit fully the benefits offered." While the aircraft were collecting vast amounts of information on the enemy more need to be done in passing on the intelligence to those who most needed it.

However a system to help process the information was already experiencing delays which meant the intelligence was not being fully exploited. The situation was not being helped by an 8 per cent shortfall in the number of imagery analysts in the RAF.

James Arbuthnot, MP, the defence committee chairman, said: "The MoD was perhaps slow to appreciate the potential of UAVs, but now recognises the important contribution they can make. "The MoD must push forward with its planned improvements so that our Armed Forces can continue to achieve information superiority over the enemy". Bob Ainsworth, the Minister for Armed Forces, said: "UAVs have a crucial role to play in future operations and we will continue to invest in them."

[Top-ranking Taliban commander among 9 killed in NW Pakistan](#)

Xinhua – 6 August

senior local Taliban commander and eight other militants were killed during an operation of security forces in northwest Pakistan, a statement released by the army said Wednesday.

Ali Bakht, a top-ranking Taliban militant, was killed during the operation in Devloi area of Swat in North West Frontier Province, said the statement. "Life at Swat remained peaceful, shops were open and people carried out their routine activities," the statement said, adding that many militants were injured.

Two Security Forces personnel were wounded in the operation, according to the News Network International (NNI) news agency. The army launched a major operation against militants in Swat valley last week after the militants killed three intelligence agents and kidnapped over 20 security personnel from a check post.

Troops stage coup in Mauritania

BBC – 6 August

Troops in Mauritania have overthrown the country's first freely-elected leader and say they have formed a state council to rule the country. President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was held after he tried to dismiss the military's top commanders.

Troops are out on the streets of the capital, Nouakchott, where tear gas was fired at about 50 protesters. President Abdallahi came to power in free and fair polls last year, taking over from a military junta. Troops rounded up the president - along with his Prime Minister Yahia Ould Ahmed El-Ouakef - apparently without needing to use force on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the president tried to dismiss four senior army officers, including the head of the presidential guard, Gen Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, who responded by launching the coup. The country has been in the grip of a political crisis since a vote of no confidence in the cabinet two weeks ago.

On Monday, 48 MPs walked out of the ruling party. Reports suggest some of the generals orchestrated the mass resignation, our correspondent James Copnall says. Nouakchott airport has been closed, security sources told the AFP news agency on Wednesday. A journalist based in Nouakchott, Hamdi Ould Mohamed el-Hacen, told the BBC people had gathered on street corners to discuss the coup - in particular the fate of the president and prime minister.

Culture Minister Abdellahi Salem Ould El-Mouallah read a statement on TV on behalf of the coup leaders announcing the presidential decree sacking the top army officers had been "annulled legally and practically". The first indications of a military coup came as state radio and television were taken off the air amid reports of unusual troop movements in Nouakchott.

The president's daughter, Amal Mint Cheikh Abdallahi, said soldiers seized her father at his house at 0920 local time (0920 GMT). She raised the alarm in a phone call to a French radio station. "They came here to find him," she told Radio France International. "They arrested him here and took him to the battalion base. It's a textbook coup d'etat."

The African Union condemned the coup, demanded a return to constitutional government and said it was sending an envoy to Nouakchott immediately. The governments of South Africa and Nigeria - both major players in the African Union - also criticised the military takeover. The US state department and the European Commission also decried the coup, with the commission warning it would suspend aid to Mauritania.

Mauritania has a long history of coups, with the military involved in nearly every government since its independence from France in 1960. Presidential elections held in 2007 ended a two-year period of military rule - the product of a military coup in 2005. The elections were deemed to have been free and fair and appeared to herald a new era of democracy.

Earlier this year, however, the president dismissed the government amid protests over soaring food prices. The cabinet that replaced it has been dogged by instability, lacking the support of a moderate Islamist party and a major opposition group that were in the former government.

Mauritania is one of the world's poorest nations as well as its newest oil producer. The desert nation, a former French colony of more than three million people, has been looking to oil revenues to boost its economy.

[Colombia considers Afghan mission](#)

Al Jazeera – 7 August

Colombia is considering sending troops to Afghanistan to assist the US-led campaign against the Taliban, the government says. Senior military officials travelled to Afghanistan on Wednesday to examine military co-operation in a special operations, counter-narcotics missions, engineering and mine-removal, the defence ministry said. "They will analyse, according to Colombia's experience, the best way to collaborate in Afghanistan and the areas where Colombia can offer its knowledge," the ministry said in a statement on its website.

Colombia has yet to take a decision on Nato participation in Afghanistan, but the South American country has contacted the British and Spanish governments about co-operation, the ministry said. Spanish daily newspaper *El Pais* said on Thursday that Colombia may add 100 soldiers to Spain's 800 troops in northwest Afghanistan next year. If Colombia did send a troop, it would be the first Latin American country to join Nato operations in Afghanistan.

Foreign troop levels in Afghanistan have increased by more than 10,000 in the past year to around 71,000. But violence has increased with attacks stemming from neighbouring Pakistan, authorities say. Taliban fighters are increasingly targeting foreign and Afghan troops with aid agencies saying violence was greater in May and June than in any month since US-led forces helped topple the Taliban government in 2001.

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium, which can be used to manufacture heroin. Colombia has received billions of dollars in US military aid to support its operations against drug traffickers and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc), the country's largest rebel group.

[Gates Pushing Plan for Afghan Army](#)

New York Times – 7 August

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates will endorse a \$20 billion plan to substantially increase the size of Afghanistan's army and will also restructure the military command of American and NATO forces in response to the growing Taliban threat, senior Pentagon and military officials said Thursday. Taken together, the two decisions are an acknowledgment of shortcomings that continue to hinder NATO- and American-led operations in Afghanistan. With the war in Iraq still an obstacle to any immediate American troop increase in Afghanistan, the plan was described by officials as an attempt to increase allied and Afghan capabilities in advance of deploying the additional American brigades that Mr. Gates and his commanders agree are necessary.

The additional American troops are unlikely to be available until next year. Under a plan initially proposed by the Afghan government and now endorsed by Mr. Gates, the Afghan National Army will nearly double in size over the next five years, to more than 120,000 active-duty troops. Such a large increase would not be possible without American funds, which will pay for trainers and for equipment, food and housing for Afghan forces. But Pentagon officials said that Mr. Gates would seek contributions from allies to help underwrite the \$20 billion cost over five years.

In a closely related decision, Mr. Gates plans to reshape a command structure that has divided the NATO and American missions in Afghanistan, a system now viewed as unwieldy in the face of increasing insurgent violence, senior Pentagon and military officials said. Under an order expected to be signed by Mr. Gates before the end of August, Gen. David D. McKiernan, the four-star Army officer who leads the 45,000-member NATO force, would be given command of most of the 19,000 American troops who have operated separately. (The NATO force already includes about 15,000 other Americans.)

The moves come nearly seven years into the war in Afghanistan, a conflict that has claimed more than 500 American lives. The last two months have been among the deadliest in Afghanistan for American forces, who are trying to contend with a sharp increase in attacks by Taliban militants, some of them staged with support from insurgents based in the remote tribal areas of neighboring Pakistan.

Pentagon officials say they hope the creation of a more unified command structure under General McKiernan will help to coordinate all forces in Afghanistan — most notably American units near the Pakistani border in eastern Afghanistan, which have operated independently of the NATO-led force in charge in southern Afghanistan. “General McKiernan is in the best possible position to most efficiently and effectively deploy all of

the resources to the benefit of the overall mission,” said Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary. “This creates one commander in country and in charge of all forces, and establishes a structure to deploy them as best suits the mission and to improve synchronization among all military assets.”

In the months ahead, NATO and the United States will nevertheless continue to pursue somewhat different missions in Afghanistan, Pentagon officials said, and the new command structure will not result in a merger of the two missions. NATO took command of the nationwide mission to stabilize Afghanistan in 2006. The allies expected to face little direct combat and to focus on reconstruction and on maintaining security in areas that were relatively calm.

In contrast, the American-led mission in Afghanistan has focused from the start of the war on combat operations to capture or kill insurgents and terrorists, as well as on training Afghan security forces, counter-insurgency and reconstruction. Although the situation has significantly changed, some allied units operate under strict constraints placed by their home governments that prevent them from participating in certain kinds of combat missions, which American officials have said is a major obstacle to beating back the Taliban.

Pentagon policy makers said one goal of the command restructuring would be to allow the movement of American and allied troops — including the British, Canadian and Dutch soldiers who participate in a full range of combat missions — to support one another in a more seamless fashion. It remains unclear if the change will persuade the militaries operating under restrictions to take on additional battlefield responsibilities. Because of the constraints on allied forces, Pentagon officials said, two kinds of missions will remain under a separate American command: running prisons and counterterrorism operations to capture or kill high-value Taliban and Qaeda leaders. Many of those counterterrorism missions are classified, so it is not publicly known how many troops will remain under American command.

The command reorganization implies that an American officer will be in charge of the NATO and American missions for the foreseeable future. The restructuring would also be intended to streamline the American-led training mission, which to a large extent has been outside the NATO structure. But Pentagon and military officials said the new approach was crafted with attention to the sensitivities of NATO allies, and Mr. Gates and other officials consulted with the NATO secretary general, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, and with the governments that have the largest number of troops in Afghanistan.

Mr. Gates has pledged that the United States will work to send up to two additional combat brigades to Afghanistan next year, a force that would number 6,000 to 10,000 troops. Previously, the goal had been to expand the Afghan Army to 80,000 from 63,000 troops, and funds had already been allocated for that. The \$20 billion will pay for the additional increase in soldiers.

Pentagon officials expect that they will need an estimated \$5 billion per year for the first three years of the expansion, and then about \$3 billion for each of the final two years of the expansion. The United States will work with allies to help pay for the effort, Mr. Morrell said. Any new American money for the expanded Afghan Army, or proposals to divert money currently in the budget to that effort, would have to be approved by Congress.

[Manila warns 'occupying' rebels](#)

BBC – 7 August

The Philippine government has given Muslim rebels 24 hours to vacate towns they are accused of occupying in the country's volatile south. "Otherwise they shall be forcibly separated from the area," Interior Minister Ronaldo Puno told reporters. He said about 800 rebels from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) had seized several villages.

Christians there have protested against a government-MILF deal that would see a Muslim autonomous zone expanded. On Monday, the Supreme Court temporarily suspended the deal, following a petition from Christian lawmakers. Regional tensions have risen since the government and MILF agreed to sign the preliminary accord, which would eventually see the Muslim autonomous zone expanded to include another 712 villages. Thousands of people in the region protested against the deal this week.

Now Christian leaders in the southern province of North Cotabato have accused the rebels of stealing cattle and burning homes. "We cannot allow these things to happen," Mr Puno said, saying he was giving the rebels "24 hours to vacate".

But a rebel spokesman, Eid Kabalu, reportedly denied the rebels were occupying land when he spoke to Radio DZBB. The rebels denied violating the terms of their truce with the government, and express frustration at the slow progress of the peace process. Monday's court ruling mean the proposed government-rebel deal is now suspended until 15 August, when the government will have to make its case in court.

Under the terms of the proposal, which would be subject to approval in a local plebiscite, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) would not only be expanded. It would also have claim to a substantial proportion of the region's rich resources.

Top security and diplomatic officials have played down the threat posed to the delicate peace process by the government's ultimatum. "This is not a declaration of war, this is normal enforcement of the rule of law," said Hermogenes Esperon, the president's peace adviser, according to the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

[Army deploys thousands more troops to Kashmir](#)

Reuters – 7 August

The Indian army is deploying around 10,000 extra soldiers in Kashmir to quell weeks of protests over land for a Hindu shrine that had sparked some of the state's worst religious

riots in two decades. The troops will be deployed around the winter capital of Jammu, a Hindu-dominated region in Muslim-majority Kashmir where thousands of people have been protesting to demand the transfer of about 100 acres of land to a Hindu shrine trust.

The dispute began after the Kashmir government had promised to give forest land to the trust that runs Amarnath, a cave shrine visited by Hindu pilgrims. Many Muslims were enraged. The government then backed down on its decision. Many Hindus, in turn, were angered. "This troop strength is in addition to large contingents of paramilitary forces and police already deployed to contain the unrest", a senior army officer, asking not to be named, told Reuters.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the disputed Himalayan region since a Muslim separatist revolt against Indian rule broke out in 1989. But the latest protests in Jammu have highlighted the grievances of the minority Hindus in the state. The city of Jammu has been under curfew for most of the week, leading to shortages of basic supplies from food to medicine.

"We can't understand what logic government has in continuing with this curfew when they have failed to contain the protests", asks Virender Sethi, a shop worker. India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh held an emergency meeting with political leaders on Wednesday to defuse the row. While all parties agreed for the need to restore peace to the region, the talks produced little concrete results.

In Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, an influential senior separatist leader on a hunger strike to protest attacks on Muslims and the economic blockade of the valley by Hindu protesters was taken to hospital on Thursday after he lost consciousness, police said. Mohammad Yasin Malik, chief of a prominent separatist party, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) began his hunger strike on Tuesday.

Muslim-majority Kashmir valley is running short of essentials after Hindu protesters blocked traffic on the main highway during protests. Shops and businesses remained closed in Srinagar for the fourth day on Thursday in protest against attacks and the highway blockade."

The JKLF, which declared a ceasefire against Indian security forces in 1994, is campaigning for complete independence for Kashmir from both India and Pakistan. Both claim the disputed region in full but rule in parts. Indian police said on Thursday they defused a powerful bomb planted on a road leading to highly guarded airport in Srinagar.

[Russian tanks enter South Ossetia](#)

BBC – 8 August

Russian tanks have entered Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia, says Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili. Georgia has been fighting separatists with ties to Russia in order to regain control of the province, which has had de facto independence since the

1990s. Russian troops in the South Ossetian capital said their artillery had begun firing at Georgian forces, Russian news agencies reported.

Russia's president earlier promised to defend his citizens in South Ossetia. Moscow's defence ministry said more than 10 of its peacekeeping troops in South Ossetia had been killed and 30 wounded in the Georgian offensive. At least 15 civilians are also reported dead.

Amid international calls for restraint, Georgia's president said 150 Russian tanks and other vehicles had entered South Ossetia. He told CNN: "Russia is fighting a war with us in our own territory." Mr Saakashvili, who has called on reservists to sign up for duty, said: "This is a clear intrusion on another country's territory. "We have Russian tanks on our territory, jets on our territory in broad daylight," Reuters news agency quoted him as saying.

Later, Moscow's foreign ministry told media that Russian tanks had reached the northern outskirts of the South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali. The Georgian interior ministry said Russian jets had killed three Georgian soldiers at an airbase outside the capital, Tbilisi, during a bombing raid on Friday, Reuters news agency reported. Russia denied any of its fighters had entered its neighbour's airspace.

Moscow's defence ministry said reinforcements for Russian peacekeepers had been sent to South Ossetia "to help end bloodshed". Amid reports of Russian deaths, President Dmitry Medvedev said: "I must protect the life and dignity of Russian citizens wherever they are," Interfax news agency reported. "We will not allow their deaths to go unpunished. Those responsible will receive a deserved punishment."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was receiving reports that villages in South Ossetia were being ethnically cleansed. Mr Lavrov added in televised remarks: "The number of refugees is growing. A humanitarian crisis is looming." Russia said it would cut all air links with Georgia from midnight on Friday.

Meanwhile Interfax quoted South Ossetian rebel leader Eduard Kokoity as saying there were "hundreds of dead civilians" in Tskhinvali. Witnesses said the regional capital was devastated. Lyudmila Ostayeva, 50, told AP news agency: "I saw bodies lying on the streets, around ruined buildings, in cars. It's impossible to count them now. There is hardly a single building left undamaged."

US President George W Bush spoke with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin about the crisis while they attended the Beijing Olympics. Later, the US voiced support for Georgia's territorial integrity and its state department said it would send an envoy to the region. Nato said it was seriously concerned about the situation, while German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on all sides to show restraint. The European security organisation, the OSCE, warned that the fighting risked escalating into a full-scale war.

Georgian Foreign Minister Ekaterine Tkeshelashvili told the BBC it wanted to ensure that any civilians who wanted to leave the conflict zone could do so safely. International Red Cross spokeswoman Anna Nelson said it had received reports that hospitals in Tskhinvali were having trouble coping with the influx of casualties and ambulances were having trouble reaching the injured.

Georgian Prime Minister Lado Gurgenedze said Georgia had simply run out of patience with attacks by separatist militias in recent days and had had to move in to restore peace in South Ossetia.

Georgia accuses Russia of arming the separatists. Moscow denies the claim. Russia earlier called an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to respond to the crisis, but members failed to agree on a Russian statement calling on both sides to renounce the use of force.

The BBC's James Rodgers in Moscow says Russia has always said it supports the territorial integrity of Georgia but also that it would defend its citizens. Many South Ossetians hold Russian passports. Hundreds of fighters from Russia and Georgia's other breakaway region of Abkhazia were reportedly heading to aid the separatist troops.

[Australian forces capture Taliban leader](#)

Xinhua – 10 August

The Australian Defense Department said here on Sunday that the Australian special forces have caught a Taliban leader behind a host of bomb attacks in Afghanistan's Oruzgan province. The Defense Department said in a statement that the Australian troops last week captured Mullah Bari Ghul, whom coalition forces believe was a key figure behind extremist operations in the province.

Defense described Bari Ghul as a key figure in providing equipment, money and foreign fighters to extremist operations in Oruzgan province and in involving in coordinating the actions of individual insurgent cells. Defense spokesman Brigadier Brian Dawson said Bari Ghul carried out the role of a "shadow governor", responsible for authorizing bomb attacks across the province. "Extremist cells in Afghanistan operate in small isolated groups and only a few key individuals have any sense of the overall provincial insurgency plan," Brigadier Dawson said.

He suggested that Bari Ghul could be ultimately responsible for the roadside blasts which killed Signaller Sean McCarthy last month and Trooper David Pearce last October. "Mullah Bari Ghul was directly responsible for the importation of component, the provision of specialists in the construction of IEDs and authorizing their emplacement across the province," Brigadier Dawson said.

[Putin announces \\$420 million in aid for war-torn S.Ossetia](#)

RIA Novosti – 10 August

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin announced on Sunday the government will provide \$10 billion rubles (\$420 million) in aid for South Ossetia after Georgia's military offensive largely destroyed the capital of the breakaway region.

Georgia launched major ground and air attacks to seize control of South Ossetia on Friday, prompting Russia to send in tanks and hundreds of troops. Regional capital Tskhinvali has been largely destroyed, and around 2,000 civilians have died according to Russia. A total of 34,000 people are reported to have fled across the Russian border. Putin visited Vladikavkaz in neighboring North Ossetia on Saturday, where thousands of South Ossetian refugees are housed.

Reporting on his visit to President Dmitry Medvedev on Sunday, Putin said: "Speaking of South Ossetia, Tskhinvali's residential housing, and border villages, everything has been virtually destroyed, to put it mildly. People are going to need help to return to their homes, and to rebuild their houses and apartments." Putin described the destruction as "colossal" and said Russia would allocate at least 10 billion rubles for housing in South Ossetia.

South Ossetia's envoy to Russia, Dmitry Medoyev, earlier told RIA Novosti that Tskhinvali had "been razed to the ground." The Emergency Situations Ministry said that 30 trucks containing 120 tons of food supplies are en route to Tskhinvali and to North Ossetia. Earlier the ministry said that Russian transport planes containing specialist medical teams, a field hospital, food and medical supplies, had been sent to Vladikavkaz to provide medical assistance to the injured.

Georgia's leadership began talks on Sunday with the Russian military on creating a humanitarian corridor to allow residents of South Ossetia to escape the ongoing conflict, Reintegration Minister Temur Yakobashvili said.

[Thousands flee Philippine clashes](#)

BBC – 11 August

Nearly 130,000 people have fled their homes following renewed fighting in the southern Philippines between the army and Muslim rebels, officials have said. There has been controversy in the region over a deal to expand a Muslim autonomous zone there. The tensions in North Cotabato province came a week after a formal deal on the expansion was blocked by the courts.

The military said the violence would not halt voting in elections in the nearby autonomous region of Mindanao. Voters there are choosing a new governor, vice governor and members of a regional legislative assembly. North Cotabato is not part of the vote, because it is not included in the five-province Autonomous Region of Muslim

Mindanao, which was created in a 1996 peace accord between the government and Muslim rebels.

Troops began their attack on Sunday, after Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels in North Cotabato ignored a 24-hour deadline to leave the area. Soldiers continued to bomb Muslim rebel positions for a second day on Monday. They regained control of two villages, and are still aiming to regain 13 others, military vice chief of staff Lt Gen Cardozo Luna told the Associated Press. At least one soldier and seven rebel fighters have been killed since the attack began.

Reports say many of the villages still occupied by the MILF are on the provincial border of mainly Christian North Cotabato and mainly Muslim Maguindanao. The rebels are said to be frustrated at the fresh obstacles towards agreeing to expand the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Regional tensions have grown since the plan was agreed, with Christians fearful of the greater powers that would be granted to rebels. The expanded zone, which would be subject to approval in a local plebiscite, would include another 712 villages. Local leaders would also be entitled to a large share of the region's rich resources.

[Sri Lanka says kills 115 Tiger rebels in fresh fighting](#)

Reuters – 11 August

Sri Lankan troops killed 115 Tamil Tiger rebels in weekend fighting in the far north of the island, the military said on Monday, as government forces continued their push into the rebels' northern stronghold. Government jets also bombed rebel positions in rebel-held areas in the north, military officials said. "Troops had killed 60 LTTE terrorists and 28 were wounded from Sunday's confrontations," said military spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara, adding that three soldiers were also killed and 12 wounded in the fighting.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were not immediately available for comment on rebel casualties from the fighting but said air raids had killed two civilians, including a school teacher. "The death, injuries and loss due to this attack, typical when Sri Lanka Air Force bombs a heavily populated area in Vanni, have been repeated more than one hundred times over the Vanni area over a period of two years," said Selvy Navaruban, rebel spokeswoman on humanitarian issues and human rights, in a statement emailed to Reuters.

The fighting came days after the military claimed they had entered the vast Vanni region in the north where the rebels' de-facto capital, Kilinochchi, is located, amid an almost-daily barrage of land, sea and air attacks. The military also said 55 Tamil Tiger rebels were killed and 47 wounded from the fighting on Friday and Saturday also in the north. Four soldiers had also been killed.

The Tigers are fighting for an independent state in north and east Sri Lanka for ethnic Tamils, a minority in the predominantly Sinhalese country. Sri Lanka's government is

pursuing a strategy to gradually retake the Tiger's northern stronghold and win the 25-year civil war that has killed more than 70,000 people. Analysts say the military has the advantage in the latest phase of the war, given its superior air power, strength of numbers and swathes of terrain captured in the island's east. But they still see no clear winner on the horizon.

Senior Al Qaeda Leader Killed In Pakistan

Reuters – 12 August

Senior Al Qaeda commander Abu Saeed al-Masri was killed in recent clashes with Pakistani forces near the Afghan border, a security official said on Tuesday. "He was believed to be among the top leadership of al Qaeda," the senior security official said on condition of anonymity.

Al-Masri, which means "the Egyptian", was the most senior al Qaeda operative to have been killed in Pakistan's tribal belt since the death of his compatriot, Abu Khabab al-Masri, an Qaeda chemical and biological weapons expert, last month. Television channels identified the dead man as Mustafa Abu al-Yazid and said he was also known as Abu Saeed al-Masri. He was killed in recent clashes in the Bajaur tribal region, a known sanctuary for al Qaeda operatives on the Afghan border, the security official said.

Yazid, commander of al Qaeda operations in Afghanistan, was an Egyptian who served time in jail with al Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahri after the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. He has been referred to as al Qaeda's third most senior figure, after the elimination or capture of five earlier occupants of the number three spot since 2001. Earlier, the September 11 Commission described Yazid as the network's "chief financial manager".

Nearly 160 people have been killed in clashes between Pakistani security forces and the militants in Bajaur since last Wednesday. "There are many foreign elements there, more than local militants," the security official said. Yazid gave a rare interview to Pakistan's private Geo Television, aired last month, in which he said a suicide bomber who carried out an attack on the Danish embassy in Islamabad in June came from the Muslim holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

Mahmood Shah, a former security chief of Pakistan's northwestern ethnic Pastun tribal areas, said al-Masri and Yazid appeared to be the same person and his death would have an impact on insurgencies in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. "It's one more important person gone. It will have an impact," Shah said. "Al Qaeda is the main machine behind the insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban, the Chechens and the Uzbeks, are used as foot soldiers as cannon fodder but the actual machine is al Qaeda."

In the latest violence in northwest Pakistan, 13 people were killed on Tuesday in a bomb attack on an air force bus in the northwestern city of Peshawar. Militants based on the Afghan border have been accused of a series of attacks on security forces over the past year. Provincial police chief Malik Naveed Khan said five of the dead were air force

personnel and eight were civilians. In the latest violence in Bajaur, six civilians trying to flee from the area were killed in cross-fire, a government official said. "Their vehicle was caught in an exchange of fire that erupted this morning," said the official based in the region, who declined to be identified.

[Iraq contractors 'cost US \\$85bn'](#)

BBC – 13 August

The US government spent \$85bn (£45bn) between 2003 and 2007 on contractors for services in support of the Iraq war and reconstruction, a report says. And by the end of 2008, spending is likely to top \$100bn, a review by the Congressional Budget Office found. Supporters say their use is cost-effective but there have also been documented cases of overcharging. Concern over security contractors also grew following the shooting deaths of 17 Iraqis in September 2007.

The US is relying on contractors in Iraq at a greater rate than in any other major conflict, the CBO said. According to CBO estimates, the US currently employs 190,000 contractors in Iraq and neighbouring countries, a ratio of one contractor per member of the US armed forces. About 20% are American, 40% are citizens from the country where they are employed; and the rest are foreign workers. They provide services ranging from security, logistics support, construction, petroleum products and food.

The majority of the \$85bn was spent on contracts within Iraq, with the remainder being awarded for contracts in countries including Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The use of security contractors has been the focus of particular attention, especially after an incident in September 2007 involving employees of the Blackwater firm which resulted in the deaths of 17 Iraqis. The US justice department is due to decide soon whether to bring charges, the Associated Press reports. The company, which said at the time that its staff acted in self-defence, is not expected to be prosecuted.

The CBO report says its analysis shows: the US spent between \$6bn and \$19bn on security work in Iraq about 25,000 to 30,000 people work for security firms in Iraq - of these, 10,000 work directly for the US government and up to 25,000 for the Iraqi government the costs of a private security contract are similar to those of a US military unit performing a similar job, although during peacetime the private contract would not have to be renewed.

Last December, the US government said it had tightened procedures to give US military commanders a greater role in co-ordinating the movements of private security staff. But the CBO notes that the legal status of contractor staff, particularly for those who are armed, remains uncertain.

The scale of the private contract business and the sums involved have prompted calls for greater scrutiny. "I believe we need to create a special committee in the US Senate to exercise oversight over contracting abuses related to reconstruction and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Senator Byron Dorgan recently. He wants a panel similar to one

set up by Senator Harry Truman in 1941 during the build-up to WWII. "The Truman Committee held 60 hearings on waste, fraud and abuse," Mr Dorgan said. "It's unfathomable to me that we don't have a bipartisan investigative committee on contracting in Iraq."

[Russians begin Georgia handover](#)

BBC – 14 August

Russian troops have begun handing over control of the area around the town of Gori to Georgian security forces. A Russian general in the area said Moscow's troops would remain nearby for several days to remove weaponry and help restore law and order in Gori. However, a BBC correspondent said a series of explosions was heard coming from hills around the town on Thursday. Georgia attacked the rebel region of South Ossetia from Gori a week ago, prompting Russian retaliation.

In Moscow, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev met the leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia - Georgia's other separatist region - and pledged to support any decision the regions made about their borders. "Not only do we support it but we will guarantee them both in the Caucasus and throughout the world," Mr Medvedev said.

Meanwhile, the US has reiterated its support for Georgia, sending the first shipments of humanitarian aid into the country. A US envoy to the region said the initial consignment of bedding and other vital supplies was the first of many that would be arriving by sea and air. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has arrived in France for talks with French and current EU President Nicolas Sarkozy. She is expected to go on to Tbilisi on Friday, to express US support for Georgia's government.

Russian troops occupied Gori after pushing Georgian forces out of South Ossetia, leading to a mass retreat from the city by Georgian troops and civilians. Gori has also come under air attack, with reports of Russian planes bombing the town after Moscow declared an end to its military operation on Tuesday. Gori, which lies some 15km (10 miles) from the South Ossetian border and is a key link to the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, had been reported calm earlier on Thursday.

The BBC's Gabriel Gatehouse, in the town, said local residents reported feeling safe and secure on Wednesday night, with Russian troops clearly in charge of the town. But the situation appeared to change on Thursday as a series of blasts were heard around Gori. Journalists, including the BBC's correspondent, were forced to leave their positions quickly.

Russia's continued deployment of troops in Gori raised concerns that the Kremlin would not make a quick withdrawal from Georgian territory, despite agreeing to a European peace plan. Moscow insists that the purpose of its continuing presence in Georgia proper is to hand over security to the Georgian police and to remove abandoned weapons and ammunition.

The Russian general co-ordinating the return of Georgian police and security forces to Gori urged residents - many of whom left town as the Georgian army retreated on Monday - to return to their homes and re-open their shops, our correspondent adds. Russian troops were allowing armed Georgian police back into the town, and would not leave until order is restored, Gen Vyacheslav Borisov said. Elsewhere, eyewitnesses in the Georgian Black Sea port of Poti said that Russian troops had entered the town in armoured vehicles. Moscow has denied the reports.

The Georgian government says that 175 people, mainly civilians, were killed during the conflict with Russia and South Ossetian separatist forces. Russia, which says that 74 of its troops were killed, reports that more than 2,000 people died in South Ossetia, the vast majority civilians allegedly killed in the Georgian attack. While none of the casualty figures have been verified independently, the UN refugee agency estimates that some 100,000 people have been displaced by the fighting, both from South Ossetia and Georgia proper. Both sides have accused each other of committing atrocities during the conflict, although little conclusive evidence has been found.

Ms Rice said late on Wednesday that Russia faced international "isolation" if it refused to respect the truce brokered on Tuesday by Mr Sarkozy. She spoke hours after Russian tanks were seen moving out of Gori on the main road to the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. Amid widespread concern, the armoured column eventually turned off the main road and troops began work to destroy or disable Georgian army bases. "We expect all Russian forces that entered Georgia in recent days to withdraw from that country," Ms Rice said. There was, the US secretary of state added, a "very strong, growing sense that Russia is not behaving like the kind of international partner that it has said that it wants to be".

And the US special envoy to the region, Matthew Bryza, told the BBC that the outbreak of violence in the Caucasus strengthened Georgia's case to join the Nato alliance. "Russia, a country with 30 times the population [of Georgia] decided to roll into its much smaller neighbour and tried to roll over it. It failed to roll over Georgia, but it would never have even thought of doing this if Georgia were already a member of Nato," he said.

TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Police prepare terror attack warning for restaurants and cinemas](#)

Telegraph – 4 August

The Daily Telegraph has learned that the National Counter Terrorism Security Office, a specialist police unit, is drawing up guidance for hospitality and entertainment sites as part of a drive to prepare for terrorist attacks on crowded public places. Big hotels will also be covered by the new "protective security guidance" to prepare for attacks including car bombs and suicide bombs.

Owners and managers of hospitality and entertainment firms will be told to assess their businesses' likely vulnerabilities to attack and prepare contingency plans for staff in the

event of an attack. The police-led security office will this month start running counter-terrorism training exercises for businesses in the "night-time economy". Known as ARGUS courses, the exercises will present staff and managers in restaurants, cinemas, theatres and hotels with a simulated terrorist attack.

There is no specific intelligence pointing to attacks on town centres and the NCTSO says its guidance documents and training exercises are intended to prepare businesses for the worst. "In the worst case scenario your staff and customers could be killed or injured, and your premises destroyed or damaged in a 'no warning', multiple and co-ordinated terrorist attack," the office has told business owners.

On its website, NCTSO gives a stark warning about the threat to Britain posed by international terrorism. It says: "Attacks around the world have shown that terrorists will attack those targets they perceive as being attractive. "Amongst the likely targets for international terrorists are locations with comparatively limited protective security measures which afford the potential for terrorists to cause mass casualties."

The Home Office said: "The National Counter Terrorism Security Office is due to publish shortly two new protective security guidance booklets for cinemas, theatres, restaurants and hotels."

[How big is the Xinjiang threat?](#)

BBC – 4 August

China has for months been warning that Xinjiang terrorists were planning attacks during the Olympics - fears that now appear well-founded. One official said recently that China had cracked five terrorist groups and arrested 82 suspected terrorists in the first half of this year alone.

But some experts believe there is only a "medium risk" that Xinjiang terrorists would disrupt the Olympic Games. Others say the whole terrorist threat has been exaggerated as an excuse to allow Beijing to carry out repression in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang, in the far west of China, is home to the Uighur ethnic group, many of whom resent Beijing's rule over the region. There has been low-level terrorist activity there for a number of years, but this appears to have increased this year ahead of the Olympics. As early as March, Wang Lequan, Xinjiang's Communist Party chief, suggested terrorists were planning attacks against this summer's Olympic Games.

There are always a few people who conspire [to] sabotage. It is no longer a secret now," he said, according to China's state-run Xinhua news agency. That warning seemed to have been borne out. Earlier this year, China said it had foiled an attack on a passenger plane flying from the Xinjiang capital, Urumqi. And just last month officials said they had shot dead five members of a group planning a "holy war" in China. Now Chinese officials seem to be blaming the East Turkestan Islamic Movement for Monday's attack

on the Kashgar police station that left 16 dead. Over recent months, senior Chinese leaders have stressed that security is the main priority for the Olympics.

So how big is the terrorist risk at the Games? Hong Kong-based security expert Steve Vickers, CEO of consultancy International Risk, said there was only a "medium risk". There are real problems in Xinjiang, but my assessment is that these people are well-known and have been infiltrated by the Chinese security apparatus," he said. Others believe China is using the Olympics as an excuse to crack down on ordinary people in Xinjiang.

Speaking before Monday's attack, Rebiya Kadeer, president of the Uyghur American Association, said there was no credible evidence that Uighurs posed a significant terrorist threat. "I call on the US government and the international community to condemn China's manipulation of terror threats to kill and intimidate Uighurs on the eve of the Olympic Games," she said in a press release. Ms Kadeer, who herself spent time in a Chinese prison, claims Uighurs suffer a broad range of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. These are said to include arbitrary detention, torture, religious repression, and the suppression of the Uighur language and culture.

Nicholas Bequelin, an expert on Xinjiang, said this latest incident could drive a wedge between the Uighurs and the Han Chinese, the country's dominant ethnic group. Over recent decades, many Han people have moved into Xinjiang, which is rich in natural resources. "My biggest concern is that an incident like this, and the repression that follows, could further polarise the Uighur and Han communities in Xinjiang," said Mr Bequelin, of Human Rights Watch. "That would be a disaster, because these people have got to live together."

[French police defuse 3 bombs in Basque region](#)

Seattle PI – 8 August

Bomb squads defused three explosive devices planted Friday at tourist areas in France's southwest Basque region on the Atlantic coast, officials said. Rescue services received an anonymous phone call before dawn, warning that bombs had been left at five tourist sites in the Basque region near France's border with Spain, the prefecture in the southwestern Pyrenees Atlantiques region said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Basque separatist group ETA, however, has been fighting since 1968 for an independent Basque homeland in northern Spain and southwestern France. But the group's bombs have generally targeted the Basque region in Spain, not France. About 1,200 people were evacuated from the sites - the casino in Biarritz, a hotel in Bidarray, vacation villages in Arcangues and Anglet, and a high-speed train route between the towns of Ondres and Boucau.

A search turned up three explosive devices, the prefecture said. Bomb squads defused one at the vacation village in Arcangues and another targeting the rail line in Ondres.

Another bomb was found at a site not mentioned by the caller - Arcangues' tourism office. It was defused as well.

The prefecture said police did not find two other devices mentioned by the caller and that authorities would remain cautious until they determined all the bombs had been found. French Interior Minister Michele Alliot-Marie's office said she had asked police to use all means to find those responsible "so they can be arrested and brought to trial with a view to punishment that she hopes will serve as an example."

[Maritime terrorism gains roots in Indian Ocean](#)

Times of India – 9 August

Maritime terrorism has gained roots in the Indian Ocean region, the Navy says. Delivering a lecture on the Vision of the Indian Navy, its chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta denied presence of Al-Qaida terrorists in the region but said there had been a marked increase in maritime terrorism across national boundaries. "Maritime terrorism across national boundaries has gained momentum in the Indian Ocean. Armed aggression has increased and multinational cooperation is required to curb it," Mehta said.

The Indian Ocean provides the shortest link between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. It accounts for nearly half of the world's container traffic, while two-thirds of the world's oil imports flow through this region. Over 200 ships pass through the Malacca strait daily. More than 15.5 million barrels of oil is shipped from the Persian Gulf by tankers each day through the Gulf of Hormuz. The Persian Gulf with 65 per cent of the world's reserves holds the key to global energy and economic progress.

The Navy chief sought better human resource management and training for shipbuilding, ship repair, intelligence sharing, surveillance and other measures against common threats of maritime terrorism and piracy, environmental protection and in other areas of ocean management. The Navy has proposed setting up of an apex body to oversee and coordinate all maritime activities including shipping, fishing and navy itself for better security and protection of maritime assets.

"An apex body needs to be formed to manage maritime affairs for quick decision making and rapid response. Currently, the fisheries and other resources are under agriculture ministry, shipping is under a separate ministry," Mehta said. "We need to have an organisational structure in which representatives of both these ministries sit together along with the Indian Navy so that we can take action that will be required when there is an emergency situation," he added.

[New violence in China's restive west kills 11](#)

AP – 10 August

Assailants using homemade bombs attacked a shopping center and hotel and battled with police Sunday in a western Chinese city far from the Beijing Olympics where local

Muslims have waged a sputtering rebellion against Chinese rule. Ten attackers and one security guard died, police said.

The pre-dawn violence in the restive Muslim region of Xinjiang came despite tightened security for the games and followed threats by an al-Qaida-linked militant Islamic group to disrupt the sporting event. Sunday's attack and an assault on border police Aug. 4 that left 16 officers dead marked a dramatic increase in violence in the region.

Police said "violent terrorists" attacked a shopping center, hotel and government buildings in the city of Kuqa in west central Xinjiang. Without providing details, the police statement said officers killed eight attackers and another two blew themselves up, while two were arrested. Three attackers were at large, it said.

In a more detailed account, the state-run Xinhua News agency said the bombs were made from bent pipes, gas canisters and liquid gas tanks. One of the largest attacks involved assailants who drove a three-wheeled vehicle with explosives into the compound of the public security bureau at about 2:30 a.m., Xinhua reported. An explosion followed that killed the security guard, injured two police and two civilians, and destroyed two police cars, it said.

Police opened fire on the attackers, killing one. Another blew himself up, injuring a third, and a fourth was captured in the assault, Xinhua said, citing an unidentified local government spokesman. Six hours later, a battle broke out in a nearby market where police found five attackers hiding under a counter, Xinhua said. The men hurled bombs at police, who fatally shot two of them, while the remaining three killed themselves with their own bombs, the news agency said.

Xinhua said the captured suspect told police 15 people were involved in the attack. Police, who said three attackers were at large, also seized a taxi used by the bombers. Police declined to confirm the Xinhua account or comment on the discrepancies between the report and the official news release.

Wang Wei, vice president of the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee, called the attacks the work of "East Turkestan terrorists" — the name some separatists use for Xinjiang — and said no government would tolerate such violence. "The very purpose of these attacks is all about separating the region from China," Wang told reporters. He said the attackers "want to use the Olympic stage to enlarge the impact."

Authorities shut down Kuqa county, a region 1,740 miles west of Beijing where some 400,000 people live, for most of the day. Soldiers with machine guns patrolled the streets and people were told not to leave their homes. A Foreign Ministry official in Beijing, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, said the restrictions were akin to martial law.

Police picked up an Associated Press reporter and photographer while they were reporting Sunday near the scene and drove them to a hotel where they were kept for

hours. On the way to the hotel, they saw one of the explosion sites: a storefront in a line of shops was burnt out, and a three-wheeled vehicle parked in front of the store was completely charred. After several hours, people were allowed to go back into the streets, though most shops stayed closed. People gathered on the sidewalk outside the places that had been attacked, including a bank, which had its facade covered with a red, white and blue tarp.

A Western tourist in Kuqa, who did not want his name or nationality mentioned for fear of the response from Chinese authorities, said he heard the explosions while he was in bed reading. "I heard some bombs and then I heard some machine guns," he said. "The bombs sounded like thunder far away." "We came down to the lobby this morning and it was breakfast as usual," but no one was allowed to go outside, the tourist said.

Residents in the street discussed the attack among themselves, but were reticent to talk to a reporter. "This doesn't usually happen. It's happening now because of the Olympics, but I don't know who is doing it," said one man, a construction worker, who wouldn't give his name for fear of official retaliation.

On Thursday, a video purportedly made by the Turkestan Islamic Party was released in which the militant group threatened to attack buses, trains and planes during the two-week Olympic competition. The group wants independence for Xinjiang and is believed to be based in Pakistan, where security experts say core members received training from al-Qaida. Xinjiang is home to the Uighurs, an 8 million-strong Muslim minority with a long history of tense relations with the Chinese.

DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

[Military aiming to adopt all-volunteer system](#)

China Post – 2 August

The military is aiming at overhauling its troops by adopting an all-volunteer system by 2013, the defense minister has revealed. The Ministry of National Defense (MND) plans to start implementing the volunteer system in 2010, reducing the number of conscripts annually with an aim to completely revert to the volunteer system in 2013, Defense Minister Chen Chao-min said Thursday.

According to the plan, the size of the troops will then eventually be reduced to 200,000 from the current 300,000 plus. But the minister said further planning for financing military spending and restructuring the troops is needed. Under the present conscription system, able-bodied males reaching the age of 18 have to serve in the military for one year. While there are more conscripts than vacancies in the military, many of them are assigned to various other sectors, including police forces and private businesses, for 14 months of "alternative services."

The planned revamping of the troops falls in line with President Ma Ying-jeou's promises made during his presidential campaign that the military will adopt an all-volunteer system. The ministry's preliminary planning requires volunteers to serve four years, with a monthly income double the minimum wage, which currently is NT\$17,280. Males who do not volunteer for military services will still need to receive three or four months of basic military training, the defense minister said.

If the plan is implemented as scheduled, students entering the eighth grade after this summer will not have to be drafted. The plan has sparked mixed reactions and various concerns, including the future lack of people assigned to the alternative services that many sectors presently rely on. Interior Minister Liao Liou-yi said that participation in Taiwan's alternative services would still be necessary even after the country's troops consists only of volunteers. The minister expressed the hope that the alternative services program will remain in the future. Taiwan currently has 14,000 to 16,000 alternative service conscripts, according to the Interior Ministry.

The conscripts serve at local schools, fire departments, high-tech companies and other non-military government agencies in the fields of sports, diplomacy, tourism, medicine, culture and environmental protection. Liao argued that such alternative services prevent the waste of human resources or time. For example, he said, allowing alternative service conscripts to serve at local technology companies can both meet the companies' needs for technology services and manpower, and help the conscripts keep their skills up to date.

Legislator Ting Shou-chung and Tsai Huang-liang, while supporting the all-volunteer system, said it would be unnecessary to maintain short-term military training for those who do not volunteer. Tsai said three to four months of military training would be too long, while Ting argued that the trainees would not be able to learn much from such short training.

Legislator Chai Trong-rong said that the MND should first solve existing problems concerning volunteer servicemen before adopting an all-volunteer force. Chai said many people find it difficult to adjust to military life after volunteering to become soldiers or officers. But as no mechanism exists to allow them to quit before their contracts expire, there have been cases where volunteers intentionally misbehaved in attempts to receive a dismissal, he said.

Observers have also pointed out that the timeframe as it is set now in the plan may prompt many students currently in school to purposely delay graduating until 2013 to avoid being drafted. College students may choose to go to graduate schools. Students going to the ninth grade this fall are the ones that would become the last conscripts before the new system is implemented. The ninth graders may simply repeat one more year at high school to dodge the conscription, the observers said. But some college students said the volunteer military services would be a good choice of employment during economic downturn.

[Pentagon shuts down controversial counter-intelligence outfit](#)

AFP – 4 August

The Pentagon said Monday it has shut down a secretive counter-intelligence outfit that aroused controversy over tracking the activities of anti-war groups. The so-called Counter-Intelligence Field Activity (CIFA) is being absorbed into a new Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) center that will be in charge of both espionage and counter-intelligence activities, the Pentagon said in a statement.

"The Department of Defense activated the Defense Counterintelligence (CI) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Center today, and simultaneously disestablished the Department's Counterintelligence Field Activity," the Pentagon said.

CIFA was created under former defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld in 2002 as a separate entity to conduct counter-intelligence efforts against suspected terrorists in the United States. It came under fire in December 2005 following disclosures that it had kept unverified surveillance reports of anti-war activists in a database.

CIFA was empowered to conduct counter-intelligence investigations, but most of its operations remain classified. It reportedly grew to employ about 1,000 people. "CIFA's designation as a law enforcement activity did not transfer to DIA. The new center will have no law enforcement function," the Pentagon said.

The Pentagon portrayed the changes as being part of a reorganization aimed at better integrating the Defense Department's counter-intelligence and human intelligence activities. The new center is led by Major General Theodore Nicholas. "Integration under one organization will result in greater collaboration in operational and support areas where both disciplines overlap," he said in a statement.

[Beijing plays it cool over US arms deals](#)

Asia Times – 6 August

Chinese leaders have repeatedly stressed that Taiwan is the most sensitive issue in China-United States relations. And US arms sales to what Beijing calls its "renegade island" have always been a potential tipping point in the delicate trilateral balance.

In past weeks, however, Beijing has played it decidedly cool. The government provided little praise for recent reports claiming the George W Bush administration was halting arms sales to Taiwan, and it refused to react furiously - as it has always done the past - over subsequent reports that Washington would resume selling advanced weapons to the island.

A convenient explanation is that Beijing does not want anything to jeopardize the Summer Olympic Games which start on Friday. In fact, Chinese officials are particularly

happy that President Bush will be present at the opening ceremony. But a closer look suggests Beijing's aloof approach may mask much more important issues.

Beijing's coolness over the conflicting reports of US arms sales to Taiwan may mark a change in its stance on the issue. China's rapid economic and military expansion and the recent thaw in cross-Taiwan Strait relations may have already had an impact on relations between the three countries.

Beijing may now recognize that US arms sales to Taiwan are a diplomatic mainstay - simply a part of life. Washington can play this card any time it likes, regardless of China's reaction. The indifference Beijing has shown recently may suggest that a more self-confident China will not dance to the tune set by Washington. China's strategists may hope that such an approach will render Washington's arms sales ploy less effective in its alleged plan to contain a roaring China.

On June 12, the Washington Post reported that senior US officials such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley were holding up the delivery of 66 F-16 C/D Block 50/52 fighter jets for Taiwan, possibly until Bush leaves office. Earlier reports from Taiwan, however, claimed that the Taipei government had privately asked Washington to delay future arms sales because it was then completing negotiations with Beijing to open cross-strait direct flights.

Four days later, Admiral Timothy Keating, commander of the US Pacific Command, indirectly confirmed that the Bush administration had placed a freeze on arms sales to Taiwan. Keating said policy-makers in the administration "reconciled Taiwan's military posture, China's current military posture and strategy that indicates there is no pressing, compelling need for, at the moment, arms sales to Taiwan".

His statement echoed earlier ones by Tan Chih-lung, the leader of Taiwan's military delegation in the United States. Taiwan's state-run Central News Agency reported that, according to Tan, eight congressional notifications of arms sales were pending in the Department of State, and it remained uncertain whether the arms procurements could be completed within Bush's term. The pending items include anti-tank missiles, Apache helicopters, Patriot PAC-3 missile batteries, diesel-powered submarines, P3C anti-submarine aircraft and sea-launched Harpoon missiles, according to Tan.

But, two days later, when asked to comment on Keating's remarks, spokesman for the Department of State Sean McCormack reiterated that the US had not changed its policy on arms sales to Taiwan. "The administration faithfully implements the Taiwan Relations Act, under which the United States makes available items necessary for Taiwan to maintain a sufficient defense," McCormack said during a press briefing. McCormack stressed the policy "is applicable for all US government agencies, whether it's the Department of Defense, Department of State or any other part of the US government".

Over the weekend of July 19-20, Wang Jin-pyng, president of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (parliament), said in Washington he was fully confident that the Bush administration

would proceed with arms sales to Taiwan after the Olympics.

Wang said he believed the US State Department would proceed with the arms sales package that Washington approved in 2001. "The passage of the procurement package is actually a 'matter of course' since it has been approved by the US president, its budget had been passed by the legislature and the relevant preparations are almost all in place," Wang said at a news conference in Washington.

Wang flew to the US last week after Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou had reasserted that weaponry for defense purposes was vital to Taiwan's security. He added that potentially improved ties with Beijing would not halt the purchase of weapons.

Taiwan's CNA reported last Wednesday that Bush would notify China of the upcoming arms sales to Taiwan when he attended the opening Games ceremony in Beijing. Quoting an unnamed source, CNA said Bush would personally tell his Chinese counterpart President Hu Jintao that Washington would provide Taiwan with weapons in line with the Taiwan Relations Act, but was likely to delay the sale until after the Olympics.

Some military analysts in Beijing believe that through contradictory remarks, Washington may be testing Beijing's reaction in the hopes of concessions on other issues. Beijing's aloof response may signal a more pragmatic and flexible approach, according to analysts. Moreover, cross-strait relations are still in their honeymoon since Ma was sworn in in May and Beijing may not feel inclined to ruin the mood with futile protests over US arms sales.

More importantly, China is greatly outpacing Taiwan economically. Taiwan's gross domestic product was US\$410.33 billion in 2007, only 11.4% of China's US\$3.6 trillion. Taiwan's economy is smaller than that of Guangdong (US\$447.79 billion in 2007), China's richest province. The gap will widen in coming years, and increasing weapons spending will only become a larger burden on Taiwan.

Under such circumstances, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) brass are happy to see more US arms sales to Taiwan as this gives them an excuse to demand a bigger defense budget for themselves. "China now can afford an arms race with Taiwan. The island's economy will collapse first if it wants to lock in such a race with China," according to an analysts in Beijing. "Our real concern is US intervention should there be a military conflict across the Taiwan Strait. Given its small size, no matter how many weapons it buys from the US, the Taiwanese military could hardly defend itself without the help of Uncle Sam," a PLA officer said. Beijing realizes that in this arrangement Taipei must pay a certain amount of "protection" money to the US in the form of arms purchase and other deals.

Chinese weapons developers may also be hoping the US sells advanced weapons to Taiwan because it is easier for Beijing to "obtain" US technology through Taiwan. The two rivals have spied on each other skillfully for many years and agents commonly infiltrate the other side. "The US is well aware of the possibility that the technologies in

weapons it sells to Taiwan could pass to China, sooner or later in one way or another, so it never wants to sell its most advanced weapons to Taiwan," another analyst said.

Also, there is a possibility - as remote as it may be - of the unification of China and Taiwan. In this scenario, all the weapons on the island would become PLA property. "Policy makers in Washington are not fools who certainly would have taken this possibility into consideration when they decide on what weapons to sell to Taiwan," the analyst says. In the end, the PLA may view US arms sales to Taiwan not so much as a threat, but as an opportunity to upgrade itself.

[Indian leaders urge Kashmir talks](#)

BBC – 6 August

Indian political leaders have appealed for calm after weeks of growing tension in Indian-administered Kashmir. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called all-party talks to discuss protests in the Muslim-dominated Kashmir valley and the Hindu-majority Jammu region. A statement afterwards called for immediate dialogue to end the unrest. The Jammu protesters are angry at a decision by the state government to revoke a move to allocate land for a Hindu shrine in the Kashmir valley.

"The all-party meeting was of the unanimous view that an environment must be created where the agitation could be suspended and the issue resolved through the process of dialogue," Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters after the talks. "There was unanimity among all those present that the first step was the restoration of peace and normalcy."

According to reports before the talks, the prime minister was expected to appeal to the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to help bring an end to the protests in Jammu. BJP supporters have formed the bulk of the demonstrations in Jammu and the party's president, Rajnath Singh, was due to attend the meeting. Over the past couple of days, the BJP president has been in discussions with Congress party leader Sonia Gandhi and the prime minister.

At least nine people have been killed and many more injured in the Jammu protests over the past fortnight. The latest death came on Wednesday when police opened fire during clashes with about 2,000 protesters in Kathua, about 90km (55 miles) south of Jammu. A number of others, including police, were reported to have been injured in the violence. Five Muslims were killed and hundreds wounded in the Kashmir valley in protests against plans to transfer land to the shrine board in June and July. A Muslim protester was also killed on Monday.

Police say that in other clashes in Jammu on Wednesday, 18 protesters and 12 policemen were injured in a clash at Jurian, a village on the outskirts of Jammu city. Police fired tear gas and fired in the air after thousands of Hindu protesters burned a police post and a government office. Police also say that railway traffic between Jammu and rest of the country was halted on Tuesday after rioting protesters damaged part of the tracks.

Two Hindu protesters were killed in Jammu region on Monday when police opened fire at a similar protest. Much of Jammu remains under curfew and troops and police are patrolling the streets.

Unrest has also broken out in the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley, where a general strike was called on Wednesday. Separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani has warned the Indian government not to take any decision regarding the land row which would be unacceptable to Muslims. The BBC's Altaf Hussain in Srinagar said that shops, schools and other business establishments across the valley have closed and little traffic is on the roads.

Muslims argued the move to set up a shrine was aimed at altering the demographic balance in the area. The Amarnath Shrine Board said that it needed 40 hectares of land to erect huts and toilets for visiting Hindu pilgrims. All 10 members of the board resigned on Wednesday in a move which the Jammu and Kashmir governor said was necessary to make it more representative of the state's Hindu community. The latest trouble comes after several years of relative calm in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

[Cluster Bomb Ban To Force Defense Overhaul](#)

Asahi Shimbun – 6 August

The Defense Ministry has announced it will destroy the Self-Defense Forces' stockpile of cluster munitions, a move that has shocked many senior officers and will force significant revisions to national defense policy. The decision came after the government in May joined an international treaty to ban the weapons, many of which remain unexploded in former conflict zones and pose a serious threat to civilians in those areas.

An air-dropped cluster bomb or ground-launched cluster warhead scatters a series of smaller submunitions, or bomblets, over a wide area. The intention is to cause indiscriminate damage to enemy soldiers and armored vehicles. At least 75 nations possess cluster munitions. Fourteen have used them in military operations. According to a European nongovernmental organization, about 13,000 civilians, often children, around the world have been killed or maimed by submunitions that exploded long after the conflict had ended.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions was adopted by about 100 nations, including Japan, on May 30 at a meeting in Dublin. It will be signed at a ceremony in Oslo in December. The accord bans the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, and export and import of cluster munitions under any circumstances. It requires signatory nations to ensure the destruction of all banned munitions as soon as possible, but no later than eight years after the convention comes into force. But it allows signatory nations to engage in military cooperation and operations with nations not party to the convention.

The Air and Ground SDF possess four types of cluster munitions, all of which are now banned. The ASDF has CBU-87/B cluster bombs, each of which contains 202 submunitions. The GSDF holds three types of cluster munitions for use, in M26 rockets,

155-millimeter howitzers and 70-mm anti-tank rockets. The M26 rocket launched from the M270 MLRS (Multiple Launch Rocket System) releases 644 submunitions. Although the government has not revealed the exact number of munitions stockpiled, the ASDF and the GSDF have spent a combined 27.5 billion yen to procure cluster munitions since the 1980s.

The SDF introduced the munitions in the 1980s during the Cold War, citing their effectiveness in defending the island nation against invasion. The weapons would help the SDF, with its limited manpower and military capability, subdue enemy troops deployed over a wide area. For this reason, the government was initially reluctant to approve the convention, saying that it possessed the munitions exclusively for defense purposes.

But Motoko Mekata, a professor at Chuo University and member of the steering committee of the Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines, dismisses this argument, saying cluster munitions are regarded as offensive weapons by the international community. The defensive role of such weapons in Japan has further been diminished since the government adopted a revised 10-year National Defense Program Outline in December 2004, under which it shifted focus to threats of small-scale terrorist and guerrilla attacks, on the grounds that a full-scale invasion by enemy military forces was now unlikely.

Joining the international treaty will require significant revisions, however, as the revised outline allows the GSDF to deploy about 100 MLRSs at five locations in Hokkaido, Tohoku and Kyushu, while the ASDF can use cluster bombs to attack landing boats and other vessels offshore, and enemy troops onshore.

The Defense Ministry is now deciding how to dispose of the cluster munitions, either by dismantling them to remove the explosives, or detonating them. It estimates that the disposal work will cost about 20 billion yen. Senior ASDF and GSDF officers said they were shocked by the government's decision to sign the treaty. The forces are now seeking weapons capable of striking targets across a wide area, for fear the ban will leave them unable to defend broad coastal areas during an attack.

A conventional artillery shell fired from the GSDF's 203-mm self-propelled howitzer--which fires at a rate of just six shells a minute--can demolish an area with a diameter of 50 meters. The howitzer's offensive capability is one-30th of the MLRS, which can launch 12 cluster-warhead rockets in a minute. And a CBU-87/B cluster bomb covers an area of 200 meters by 400 meters, or 160 times larger than a regular bomb.

The Defense Ministry is considering introducing new cluster munitions developed by France and Germany that are not banned under the convention, which stipulates that a weapon will be exempted if: Each munition contains fewer than 10 explosive submunitions; each submunition is designed to detect and engage a single target; and each submunition is equipped with an electronic self-destruction mechanism.

But Mekata, the Chuo University professor, remains skeptical about the Defense Ministry's stance. "(Such) low-precision munitions are outdated when many weapons are now capable of pinpointing their targets," she said.

[Tej: Let army negotiate redeployment](#)

Bangkok Post – 6 August

Foreign Minister Tej Bunnag yesterday proposed the military be authorised to discuss with Cambodia the reduction in the number of soldiers deployed in the Preah Vihear standoff, said a source at Government House. However, the source said Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej told the cabinet meeting yesterday he preferred the term "redeployment" to partial withdrawal of troops. The source added that troop reduction was proposed to ease tensions between the countries.

In his one-page report to the cabinet, Mr Tej also suggested that the troop readjustment be made before the third week of August, when the foreign affairs ministers of the two countries are to meet again to discuss the border dispute. He said the Thai military should maintain as many soldiers as necessary to protect Thai sovereignty and to ease tensions at Wat Keo Sikha Kiri Svava and the area around the Preah Vihear temple.

Mr Tej's report follows his meeting with his Cambodian counterpart Hor Namhong last week in Siem Reap. The source said Mr Samak told the cabinet that care was needed in the wording used by Thailand in suggesting the troop readjustment, so as not to further aggravate the border dispute. He also insisted that any readjustment of troops should be carried out simultaneously by both sides.

Meanwhile, army chief Gen Anupong Paojinda maintained yesterday that the Ta Moan Thom temple is located on Thai soil and Thai soldiers have been guarding the area for years. He said the army has urged Cambodian authorities not to send troops into the area, as it would create tensions unnecessarily and disrupt ongoing border demarcation activities.

Gen Anupong said the situation at Ta Moan Thom was under control. He declined to comment on speculation that Cambodia tried to further complicate border conflicts with Thailand in the wake of the Preah Vihear row. "It is a sensitive matter. I am a security officer and not in a position to criticise. But we have been trying to prevent any confrontations and to promote understanding," he said.

The Ta Moan Thom temple came into the spotlight after Thailand barred Cambodian troops from visiting the area last weekend. Army deputy spokeswoman Col Sirichan Nga-thong said the presence of Thai soldiers at Ta Moan Thom is routine and operations are limited to within accepted Thai territory. She also said army activities in the area are carried out to protect Thai sovereignty and to sustain bilateral relations between the two countries.

[AU to drop Mauritania after coup](#)

BBC – 9 August

The African Union (AU) is to suspend Mauritania's membership of the group following a coup which overthrew the democratically elected president. The chair of the AU said that the suspension would last until a constitutional government was restored.

Renegade soldiers detained President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi on Wednesday after he tried to sack army officers. The coup has been widely condemned by the international community and the US has suspended all non-humanitarian aid.

"The coup is a serious setback for Mauritians because it has robbed the people of their basic right to freely elect leaders of their own choice," said Tanzania's Foreign Minister Bernard Membe, who holds the AU's rotating presidency.

President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi is being held along with the country's prime minister in an undisclosed location. Gen Muhammad Ould Abdelaziz, who led the military coup, has pledged to safeguard democracy in the country but has, as yet, set no date for an election.

A representative from the Arab League said he held talks with Gen Abdelaziz and was assured that democracy would be restored. "We got guarantees that the parliament, the democratic institutions, the political parties and freedom will continue to exist," Assistant Secretary General Ahmed bin Heli told reporters.

However, in remarks published on Saturday, Gen Abdelaziz said they would continue to detain the president to avoid any escalation. "We will not release the deposed president at the time being for security reasons. We are now trying to make calm prevail," he is quoted as telling the London-based daily Asharq al-Awsat.

The US has withheld more than \$20m (£10m) in non-humanitarian aid to the country following the coup. The funds include \$15m (£7.5m) in military-to-military co-operation, more than \$4m (£2m) in peacekeeping training, and more than \$3m (£1.5m) in development assistance.

Mr Abdallahi became Mauritania's first democratically elected leader in 2007 after a coup two years earlier, also instigated by Gen Abdelaziz. It was the first free and fair poll in more than two decades in the country.

[North Korea still on US terror blacklist](#)

Channel NewsAsia – 11 August

Japan's foreign minister said the United States would not remove North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism on Monday's target date due to a delay in a denuclearisation deal. US President George W. Bush began the delisting in June after the communist state submitted a list of its nuclear programmes. Under US law, the process takes 45 days, which would end Monday and be the earliest the delisting could happen.

But Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura said US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told him by telephone that no date had been set to take North Korea off the blacklist. "I asked her, 'as details on the verification have yet to be decided, can I take it that the delisting won't happen today?' And she said, 'Yes, you can take it that way,'" Komura told reporters.

The United States has not been satisfied that North Korea's declaration is accurate or that measures to verify it are in place. Dennis Wilder, the US National Security Council senior director for Asian affairs, said Sunday that a delisting on Monday would be "unlikely."

North Korea, which tested an atom bomb in 2006, agreed to end its nuclear programme last year in exchange for badly needed aid and security guarantees. The US delisting would allow the impoverished state to receive US aid and international loans. The six-nation disarmament deal involves the two Koreas, China, the United States, Japan and Russia.

Japan has taken the hardest line at the talks. It opposed the US delisting due to a row over Pyongyang's kidnappings of Japanese civilians in the 1970s and 1980s to train spies for the regime.

DEFENCE ACQUISITION AND TECHNOLOGY

[Iran Says New Weapon Can Close Strait of Hormuz](#)

Defense-Aerospace – 5 August

Iran says it has "recently" tested a naval weapon that can destroy any vessel within a 300-kilometer radius, and the head of the Revolutionary Guards has said that Iran could close the Strait of Hormuz "easily and on an unlimited basis" if Iran is ever attacked.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander Mohammad Ali Jafari said in Tehran on August 4 that the new weapon is "unique in the world" and that "no warship or vessel of the enemy will be safe within a 300-kilometer radius of Iran's borders" if it is used against them. "This weapon is completely Iranian-built and, according to our information, no other country has used this technology before," Jafari said.

The claims come amid an ongoing standoff between Iran and the West over Tehran's disputed nuclear program, which the West says is aimed at making nuclear bombs. Tehran, however, has always denied the allegation, saying its nuclear program is only for civilian purposes. There is no word yet on Tehran's response to the world powers' latest proposal of economic incentives in return for Iran's pledge to freeze uranium-enrichment activities. The latest informal deadline for Iran's "clear answer" to the proposal expired on August 2. The United States and Israel have said they prefer to resolve the crisis diplomatically, but have not ruled out other options, including military action against Iran.

In an apparent response to such threats, Jafari said on August 4 that in case of a military strike on Iran it would use all possible means to respond. Jafari said that although the enemy would seek a short war, Iran would "prolong it." The IRGC chief also mentioned that Iran is capable of closing the main oil-export route in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and that it could block this important corridor if Iran came under military attack -- causing an extreme hike in world oil prices.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), roughly 40 percent of all seaborne oil traded in the world passes through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow water channel between Iran and Oman. The EIA estimates that last month more than 15 million barrels per day of crude oil from Persian Gulf producers passed through the strait, and the majority went to Asia, Europe, and the United States.

Jafari said the Strait of Hormuz "is within the range of Iran's assortment of weapons" and Iran could close the trade channel for an unlimited period of time. International military experts often cast doubt on the accuracy of Iran's military claims. AP quoted Israeli analyst Ephraim Kam as saying Iran always boasts "about their military weapons and their military capabilities and saying how unique they are, but they are usually just standard military weapons."

Doug Richardson, the editor of "Jane's Missile and Rockets" magazine, tells RFE/RL's Radio Farda that the new naval weapon tested by Iran is probably a missile that it bought from Russia. "I had a look through the different types of antiship missiles which exist in the world and there are not many [that have] a 300-kilometer range. We knew as far back as 2005 [that the Iranians] were buying a Russian antiship missile called Club and it is in that range category," Richardson says. "So you'd think [that for] a planned purchase being announced in 2005, 2008 sounds about right for the hardware being delivered and now being flight-tested." Iran claimed last month that it tested a new version of its Shahab missile with a range of 2,012 kilometers.

[Official: Russian arms sales to set new record](#)

Washington Post – 5 August

Russian arms sales are set to reach a new post-Soviet record this year, a top official said Tuesday. Russia's weapons exports will exceed \$8 billion this year, Russian news agencies quoted Mikhail Dmitriyev, head of the Federal Service for Military and Technical Cooperation, as saying. Arms sales have grown at a quick pace, reaching a post-Soviet record of \$7.5 billion last year and on track to surpass that for 2008.

According to the latest report by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Russia accounted for a quarter of global arms sales in 2003-2007, coming a close second after the United States. While China and India have been the leading customers, Russia recently also has struck big weapons deals with Venezuela, Algeria and Iran. Dmitriyev on Tuesday confirmed that Russia completed the delivery of 24 Su-30 fighter jets to Venezuela. But despite the steady increase in sales, Russia has suffered several recent,

highly publicized failures in arms exports that were widely attributed to swelling production costs and the general inefficiency of the nation's weapons industries.

Russia demanded a revision of the contract price in a deal to refurbish a Soviet-era aircraft carrier for the Indian Navy, and difficult talks with the disgruntled Indian officials are still ongoing. It also has failed to fulfill China's order for 38 Il-76 transport planes and Il-78 tankers, leading to the suspension of the deal. Earlier this year, Algeria also returned the MiG-29 fighter jets it bought from Russia, complaining of their poor quality.

Dmitriyev acknowledged that Russia's military industries have struggled to fulfill the earlier contracts. "At present, we have a queue of foreign customers waiting for military products, foremost air defense systems under earlier contracts," Dmitriyev said, according to the ITAR-Tass news agency

[Israel freezes defense sales to Georgia, in deference to Russia](#)

Haaretez – 5 August

Defense officials said Tuesday that Israel has decided to halt sales of military equipment to Georgia in deference to objections by Russia, Georgia's bitter rival.

The officials say the freeze is partially intended to give Israel leverage with Moscow in its attempts to persuade Russia not to ship arms and equipment to Iran. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity as Israel does not officially publish details of its arms sales.

Among items Israel has been selling to Georgia are pilotless drone aircraft, military experts in Georgia have said. Russian fighters shot one down in May, according to UN observers. According to the Israeli daily Maariv, Russia sent Israel a letter of protest after that incident. The Foreign Ministry declined to comment on the issue Tuesday

[Indian army orders additional BrahMos cruise missiles](#)

RIA Novosti – 5 August

The Indian army has ordered an additional batch of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles from the Russian-Indian BrahMos Aerospace joint venture, the company's CEO said Tuesday. "The army leadership realizes that weaponry such as the BrahMos missiles will ensure victory to the country which possesses it in any conflict," Sivathanu Pillai, who is also the managing director of BrahMos Aerospace, said without disclosing the exact size of the order.

The BrahMos missile has a range of 290 km (180 miles) and can carry a conventional warhead of up to 300 kg (660 pounds). It can hit ground targets flying at an altitude as low as 10 meters (30 feet) and has a top speed of Mach 2.8, which is about three times faster than the U.S.-made subsonic Tomahawk cruise missile.

Pillai said the recent acquisition of an assembly plant in the state of Kerala from Kerala Hightech Industries Ltd in addition to the main plant in Hyderabad, would allow the

company to increase production to 50 BrahMos missiles a year and fulfill the army orders on schedule. Established in 1998, BrahMos Aerospace designs, produces and markets supersonic missiles, whose sea-based and land-based versions have been successfully tested and put into service with the Indian army and navy.

Pillai said in June that the company had finished the development of the airborne version of the BrahMos missile and the Indian air force had chosen SU-30 MKI Flanker-H multirole fighter as a trial platform for the missile. Experts estimate that India could purchase up to 1,000 BrahMos missiles for its armed forces in the next decade, and export 2,000 to other countries during the same period.

[Indian Army's Nag Missile Ready for User Trials](#)

Defense News – 6 August

India completed the development trials of its third-generation anti-tank guided missile, Nag, on Aug. 5 and 6 in the desert of Rajasthan. Following user trials next month, the missile will be inducted into Indian army service in 2009, Defence Ministry sources said in an Aug. 6 statement.

The tests conducted this week "were specially meant to demonstrate the tandem warhead against both stationary and moving targets," according to the statement. "With these trials, the development flights stand completed and the Nag system is now ready for user trials. The mobility in desert terrain has also been comprehensively demonstrated."

The user, the Indian army, has already ordered 443 Nag missiles and 13 Namicas tracked carriers for the missiles. All will be delivered over the next three years. The Aug. 5-6 trials were the first tests witnessed by representatives of the Indian army. "Both targets hit, confirming the system capabilities of the Nag missile," the ministry statement said.

The Nag missile, with a 4-kilometer strike range, will be manufactured by state-owned Bharat Dynamics. The Nag, an all-weather, fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile, is one of five missile systems developed by the government's Defence Research and Development Organisation under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program. Design work on the missile started in 1988, and the first tests were carried out in 1990. The missile uses a high-explosive anti-tank warhead to penetrate armor found in the latest tanks.

[Six Russian-made multirole helicopters arrive in Indonesia](#)

Antara – 6 August

Six Mi-17-V helicopters, ordered by Indonesia from Russia in 2003, arrived at the Indonesian Navy's airbase in Surabaya, East Java, on Wednesday. The Indonesian Defense Ministry's director general for defense facilities Rear Marshal Eris Heriyanto, Russian Ambassador to Indonesia Alexander Ivanov, and a number of Indonesian National Defense Forces (TNI) officials were present at the air base when the brand-new helicopters arrived.

After the helicopters had landed, Heriyanto and a representative of the Russian company that had made them, Rosoboronexport, signed notes on the aircraft's delivery. Fully armed, the six helicopters are to be used by the Army's Aviation Center (Penerbad).

The helicopters' procurement process was marred by a corruption scandal which caused the state to lose around US\$3.24 million. However, the government went ahead with the purchase worth around US\$21.6 million as the corruption case was being settled in court.

Russian Ambassador Ivanov said the helicopters were reliable and had been used in many countries. "These helicopters can be used not only for military purposes but also for non-military assignments such as disaster mitigation operations," he said. The envoy also said the arrival of the helicopters also marked the sound bilateral relations existing between Indonesia and Russia, especially in the military field.

[LYONS: Taiwan arms freeze](#)

Washington Times – 6 August

When President Bush came to power in 2001, his administration had an announced policy to improve the defensive posture of Taiwan. However, recent statements from the administration have made it clear that the president has suspended or is "freezing" arms sales to Taiwan for an undetermined period. While administration officials deny such a "freeze" exists, other reports have suggested the freeze may become permanent.

Such a policy choice would be a tragedy not just for the people of Taiwan, but for our U.S. military forces who may have to defend Taiwan from a Communist China that shows no inclination to consider a future for Taiwan other than from its own dictat. In view of the rapidly expanding Chinese military modernization program, the current freeze makes no sense.

Taiwan, along with our friends and allies, could not be faulted for viewing the freeze as a first step in abandoning democracy for Taiwan and adding a significant degree of uncertainty to our Asian security policy. This is not a legacy President Bush should want to leave for his successor.

As Adm. Timothy Keating, current USCINCPAC (United States Pacific Command) commander, recently pointed out in an address at the Heritage Foundation, Taiwan's military equipment is getting older, leading to an expanding imbalance as the People's Republic of China (PRC) accelerates the modernization of its military forces, which include a force projection capability. There are reports that China is planning to construct an amphibious force consisting of 6 new Type O81 helicopter assault ships and 3 Type O71 landing dock assault ships. These forces are clearly not for defensive purposes.

Since his election in March, President Ma Ying-jeou and the new Kuomintang (KMT) government have moved quickly to reduce tension with mainland China. The Bush administration has worked hard to show its preference for many of the moves the KMT

government is now trying to do. However, for the people of Taiwan and for the United States, the preservation of democracy on Taiwan remains paramount.

Chinese military writings over the last decade have made it patently clear that Taiwan's value to China is as a new military base. They look at Taiwan as an unsinkable aircraft carrier; controlling Taiwan will allow Chinese military forces to break out of what has been called the "First Island Chain" and to then dominate East Asia. Even with President Ma's conciliatory moves to reduce tension with mainland China, there has been no reciprocity by the PRC.

Since the Taiwan election in March, China has shown no inclination to reduce its order of battle facing Taiwan, or even to slow the rate of growth in these forces. The Chinese air force flies up to five sorties a day up to the "midline" of the Taiwan Strait, creating a strain on Taiwan's air defense posture, made more burdensome by the increasing number of nearly-impossible-to-evade, long-range Russian S-300 anti-aircraft missiles.

Since 2001, the number of Chinese ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan has increased from about 400 to over 1,250, and include 250 new land attack cruise missiles. The number of modern, fourth-generation fighters facing Taiwan has grown from about 150 to about 500. The number of modern submarines has grown from about eight to about 30. This does not include the new underground submarine pens on Hainan Island, which provide a base to interdict the critical sea lines of communication coming from the Straits of Malacca to Taiwan and our allies Japan and South Korea.

Had the Bush administration's original 2001 arms sales package to Taiwan of new destroyers, new Patriot anti-ballistic missile interceptors, P-3 anti-submarine aircraft and eight new, conventional submarines been transferred immediately, Taiwan might have been able to sustain a margin of technical superiority and deterrent capability. Further, as many as 66 new F-16 fighters that Taiwan has requested in the last two years would also have to be added to the equation.

There can be no errors in preserving the military balance in the Taiwan Strait. We either have a sincere interest in Taiwan's ability to defend itself, as stated in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, or we do not. I suggest that America continues to have vital interest in sustaining Taiwan's survival as a democracy, plus a vested interest in helping the Taiwanese to defend themselves. Failing in our responsibility to provide the necessary defensive arms to Taiwan could force Taiwan to renew a latent nuclear weapons program to maintain some semblance of deterrence in the Straits.

Until mainland China changes its totalitarian regime and can accept Taiwan on its own terms, the creditability of American leadership demands that we do what's necessary to defend freedom on Taiwan. This should be the legacy that the Bush administration leaves for its successor.

James A. Lyons Jr., a retired U.S. Navy admiral, was commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, senior U.S. military representative to the United Nations, and deputy chief of naval operations, where he was principal adviser on all Joint Chiefs of Staff matters.

[Turkish Navy to receive to more US frigates](#)

Turkish Daily News – 6 August

The United States is preparing to transfer another two decommissioned Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided missile frigates to the Turkish Navy, and the two sides are continuing talks on final details, officials said. Congress has recently approved the transfer and President George W. Bush has signed it. One of the frigates will be granted and the other will be sold, one official said.

At the end of the ongoing final technical notification talks, the two sides are due to decide on the degree of maintenance and repair work the two ships will undergo in the United States and about the time of delivery, the official said. Turkey should pay for repair and maintenance expenses at U.S. shipyards. Both frigates, decommissioned from the U.S. Navy in past years, are valued at around \$125 million, one U.S. source said.

Turkey's Navy has already been operating eight other Perry-class frigates granted earlier by the United States. These frigates are specialized in surface combat, and in order to bolster the vessels' antisubmarine capabilities, Turkey deploys with them S-70 B Seahawk naval warfare helicopters, purchased from U.S. manufacturer Sikorsky Aircraft. Turkey presently has seven S-70Bs, but under a 2005 contract with Sikorsky is preparing to receive another 17 helicopters.

The United States had proposed the delivery to Turkey of the two frigates under a 2007 plan to transfer several recently decommissioned war ships to a number of allied nations. Under the original plan, the United States had also offered two Osprey-class minehunters, but Turkey is expected not to accept them as the ships are not compatible with the Turkish naval system, officials said.

As Turkey does not have coasts on oceans, frigates -- which are smaller than cruisers and destroyers but larger than corvettes -- are the largest type of surface war ship in the Turkish Navy's inventory.

[Ottawa to buy choppers, lease drones for military](#)

The Star – August 7

Canadian troops battling Taliban militants in Afghanistan will get the helicopter support they've sought since 2006 in a complicated arrangement involving a commercial contractor and the U.S. Army. Defence Minister Peter MacKay and Public Works Minister Christian Paradis formally announced Thursday that Canada will buy six used CH-47D Chinooks from the Americans for \$292 million.

The plan is virtually identical to a proposal that was rejected by air force staff in August 2006, according to documents obtained by The Canadian Press. Before the Chinooks arrive in Kandahar early next year, just under the wire for the February 2009 deadline imposed by the Manley commission, the air force plans to lease six Soviet-style helicopters from a commercial company for \$36 million.

Those helicopters, Russian-built Mi-8s, will be available for one year, starting this fall and will take Canadian soldiers off the bloody, bomb-laced roads of Kandahar "After some dark years after previous governments starved our Forces, as the prime minister has announced with much enthusiasm, we're happy to say that Canada is back and I'm proud to make this announcement today in support of that claim," MacKay told an audience at an air base in Hubert, Que.

Parliament's extension of Canada's combat mission to 2011 came with two major equipment caveats – helicopters and unmanned surveillance aircraft. The short-term lease of Russian helicopters from Toronto-based Skylink and the purchase of U.S. Army Chinooks, already in theatre, will not affect the air force's long-term, \$4.2-billion plan to buy 16 brand new CH-47F Chinooks, MacKay said.

In addition, the Defence Department will spend \$109 million on two separate leases of unmanned surveillance aircraft. Getting to Thursday's helicopter announcement has been a tortured bureaucratic exercise. The internal debate has pitted the army, frantic to reduce soldiers' exposure to deadly roadside bombs, against a frustrated air force that's demanded it get a versatile aircraft, useful in more places than just Afghanistan.

The Conservative government announced in June 2006 that it would buy 16 new medium-to-heavy-lift helicopters, a decision rushed forward after Canada's battle-group commander in Kandahar said aircraft support was an urgent requirement. Since deploying to southern Afghanistan, soldiers have hitched rides on the helicopters of other nations, when they were available.

The Boeing-manufactured Chinook was quickly identified as the chopper of choice by the air force and the federal government began sole-source contract negotiations. But the whole process came to a screeching halt in August 2006 as defence planners debated what kind of missions the choppers would do and the equipment that needed to be built into the aircraft.

The air force said the CH-47F – the latest Chinook model – was the most versatile choice, but planners realized back then that it would 2011 at the earliest before they could be delivered. A Sept. 19, 2006, briefing note to then-chief of defence staff, Gen. Rick Hillier, show defence staff debated the "interim lease-loan-acquisition of existing D – or first production F-model Chinooks." But the planners rejected idea because while the "D-model may be available but they are significantly different aircraft" than Canadian Forces medium-to heavy-lift helicopters.

It was believed that under such a scheme delivery of the coveted F-model Chinooks "would ultimately be delayed." The Defence Department decided to try to convince other countries, who'd placed orders ahead of Canada in the Boeing production line, to change places – a strategy that ultimately failed.

It took the intervention of John Manley's blue-ribbon panel on Canada's future in Afghanistan to force the entrenched officials to revisit the earlier proposal. The leased Russian helicopters will come from Toronto-based Skylink Aviation Inc., will be upgraded to include a defensive system and will come with their own pilots, Defence officials said. The federal government has also stipulated the Mi-8s, a 1960s vintage design, be no more than five years old. Canadian air force pilots are currently training in the U.S. to fly the Chinooks.

[Israel, Canada Ink UAV Deal](#)

Defense News – 13 August

Israel Aerospace Industries has signed a contract to supply unmanned aerial drones to Canada for use by its special forces, Israel's Ynet news service reported Aug. 13.

The Heron-TP drones each have a wingspan of 26 meters (85 feet) and can remain airborne for 36 h The first batch of aircraft, worth an estimated \$90 million, would be delivered by 2011, with another series furnished in the following three years at a cost of \$35 million, Ynet said, without stating how many aircraft are involved in the deal.

An official at the aerospace company confirmed the agreement had been signed but declined to give further details. The company is hoping to sign another contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars to supply similar drones to Germany, the official said. ours at a time at an altitude of up to 1.5 kilometers (about a mile).

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

[Italy deploys troops to fight street crime](#)

CNN – 4 August

The Defense Ministry says hundreds of soldiers have been deployed in cities across Italy as part of government measures to fight street crime. In Rome, some 400 men and women are deployed at subway and railway stations and at an immigrant center. They are not expected to be immediately deployed in the capital's historic center.

In Milan, some 150 soldiers were patrolling the Duomo cathedral and sensitive sites such as the U.S. consulate and the city's synagogue. Soldiers were also deployed in Naples, Bologna and Palermo, Italian reports said. More soldiers will be deployed in coming days, reaching an overall total of 3,000, said Lt. Col. Mario Busi of the Defense Ministry.

Premier Silvio Berlusconi's conservative government had proposed the measure as part of a security package that also toughens rules for illegal immigrants, whom some Italians

link to crime. The measure, recently approved by parliament, remains in effect for six months.

Defense Minister Ignazio La Russa dismissed criticism that the soldiers would scare residents, saying that instead they could help address citizens' concerns on security. The people more likely to be afraid, he said, were "the thieves, the rapists, the criminals." Berlusconi has made law and order a priority after winning April elections on promises to crack down on crime.

Some critics say the deployments will end up militarizing the cities, while others bring up the opposite argument that a deployment of 3,000 soldiers is little more than a show. In the 1990s, soldiers were sent into Sicily to help free up police for investigations of the Mafia.

[Rising global food and oil prices dominate SAARC Summit](#)

Bhutan Broadcasting Service – 4 August

The 15th SAARC Summit ended signing four agreements and the adoption of the Colombo Statement on Food Security. At the two day summit, the heads of states expressed grave concern over escalating global food and oil prices.

The second and last day of the 15th SAARC Summit started early with the heads of state taking a retreat. The 15th SAARC Summit ended with the signing four agreements. These include the agreement on the Charter on SAARC Development Fund, the agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, the agreement on establishment of regional standards organization and the protocol on the accession of Afghanistan to SAFTA.

The summit also adopted the Colombo Statement on Food Security after the heads of states expressed grave concern over the escalating food and oil prices. It also adopted the 15th SAARC Summit declaration.

On Saturday, the SAARC head of states called for collective and concerted efforts to fight terrorism. The heads of state also called for measures to deal with the rising cost of energy and ensure food security in the region. The need to enhance trade among the SAARC countries was also discussed at the two day summit.

Security was tight at the two day summit though the LTTE had declared a ceasefire during the SAARC summit. Over 20,000 policemen were deployed in the city to ensure the safety of the delegates and ensure that nothing untoward would disturb the proceedings of the summit.

Bhutan's Prime Minister Lyonchen Jigmi Y. Thinley, President Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka, Nepal's Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, the Chief Advisor of Bangladesh Fakhruddin Ahmed, Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai, Pakistan Prime Minister Makhdoom Yosuf Raza Gilani and

Maldivian President Maumoom Abdul Gayoom participated in the Summit. The next summit will be held in the Maldives.

On the sidelines of the SAARC Summit, the Prime Minister Lyonchen Jigmi Y. Thinley met with the Prime Minister of Nepal Girja Prasad Koirala and the Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh. The Prime Minister also met with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and the Chief Advisor of Bangladesh Fakhruddin Ahmed.

The last day of the 15th SAARC Summit started early with the heads of states taking a retreat after a series of discussions on Saturday. On Saturday, the SAARC leaders highlighted the need for collective efforts to combat terrorism, rising food and fuel price and ensure energy and food security and enhance trade in the region.

[MYANMAR: Food shortages "significant"](#)

IRIN – 4 August

Three months after Cyclone Nargis hit southern Myanmar, hundreds of thousands of people are still not back on their feet. "The situation in Myanmar remains dire," Chris Kaye, World Food Programme (WFP) country director, said. "The vast majority of families simply don't have enough to eat."

According to the recent Post-Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA), 42 percent of all food stocks were destroyed and 55 percent of families only had stocks for one day or less. Moreover, 924,000 people will need food assistance until the November harvest this year, while around 300,000 will need relief until April 2009.

In June, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that about 200,000 hectares, or 16 percent, of the delta's total 1.36 million hectares of agricultural land had been severely damaged in the cyclone and would "not be available for planting this season".

Despite recent efforts to assist local farmers replant their next paddy crops by end-July, many failed. More than 12 weeks after the cyclone hit, leaving 140,000 people dead or missing, many farmers continue to lack the necessary tools or machinery to till the soil after the loss of thousands of plough animals. In mid-July, just as the planting season was coming to a close, the FAO reported that upwards of 75 percent of farmers in the area lacked sufficient seeds.

The government claims 80,000 hectares of paddy fields were not planted in time, while others estimate that 25 percent of farmers were not able to plant at all. But even for those who were able to plant, questions remain as to the quality of seeds, as well as their access to fertilisers, casting doubt on the likelihood of a successful harvest. One farmer from Bogale, at the southern tip of the delta, told IRIN he was sure his paddy crop would fail or yield badly, but hoped, with help from international donors, that his family of six would not starve.

According to the FAO, almost 18,000 fishermen lost their lives in the cyclone, with another 10,000 still missing. More than 21,000 hectares of aquaculture ponds were destroyed and more than 2,000 larger mechanised fishing boats lost. Moreover, tens of thousands of non-mechanised boats, accounting for the livelihoods of thousands of families in the affected area, are believed to have been lost.

Since small-scale fishing is the mainstay activity for so many cyclone survivors - providing the main source of diet and household income - many storm-affected families have found it virtually impossible to continue. The government plans to sell 9,000 boats by installment, of which 3,000 have so far been completed.

With 89 percent of PONJA respondents describing food as their highest priority expenditure, many now find themselves having to make particularly difficult decisions. "I always wanted them to be educated," one 47-year-old woman from Pyapon at the southeast part of the delta, one of the worst-hit areas, told IRIN about her three children. "But now I'm thinking of sending them out to work to help out instead."

Food assistance from donors and the government notwithstanding, many survivors complain they simply cannot get by on what they receive and are concerned about where their next meal will come from. Others still find themselves forced to borrow money from local money lenders, increasingly placing them in debt from which they may never recover.

[Thai, Malaysian cops to jointly tackle cybercrime](#)

The Star – 5 August

Malaysian and Thai police will cooperate to stem the rising tide of cybercrime. Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan said the two countries would share intelligence to get more information and identify the groups involved in Internet-related scams, as well as their modus operandi.

"We are living in a globalised world ... where people from different nations are offering business to citizens in other countries with the intention to cheat them," he said. Musa said many people had been duped by promises of wealth via methods such as the Nigerian letter scam, black money and credit card fraud.

Police had uncovered syndicates run by Malaysians and African nationals, he said at a media conference at the end of the two-day 19th Departmental Review of the Joint Malaysia-Thailand Working Committee on Criminal Activities. Also present were Thai Police chief General Patcharawat Wongsuwan and Malaysian CID chief Datuk Mohd Bakri Zinin.

Two weeks ago, Thai police arrested 18 Nigerians who were involved in an Internet scam in Bangkok. "We need more information to educate the people so that they will not fall for such scams," Musa said. He said that with better cooperation and sharing of database, police would be able to identify the culprits involved and bring them to justice.

At the meeting, Malaysia and Thailand also agreed to enhance cooperation and map out new strategies to tackle transnational crime. The other priority areas include terrorism, vehicle theft and human trafficking, Musa said, adding that the issue of sea piracy would be discussed further at their next meeting in Sabah next year. Musa also said that the level of cooperation among Asean police would be greatly enhanced when the Aseanpol permanent secretariat is established in Kuala Lumpur.

[Indonesia, Australia complete border security alert computer project](#)

Antara – 7 August

Indonesian Minister for Law and Human Rights Andi Matalatta and visiting Australian Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Senator Chris Evans on Wednesday announced the successful implementation of a major border movement alert computer project.

According to an Australian embassy media release made available to Antara on Thursday, Senator Evans said the Enhanced CEKAL System was a partnership between Australian and Indonesian immigration services and an example of the close cooperation between the two countries to enhance border security.

"The CEKAL system is an Indonesian system used in ports and offices in Indonesia, and also in embassies and consulates around the world, to check the names of people applying for visas or entry permits," Senator Evans said.

"The Enhanced CEKAL System is a major upgrade to the CEKAL system and it is now operational at five Indonesian ports - Jakarta, Denpasar, Surabaya, Medan and Batam - it will enable more reliable detection of people of concern, as well as assist to prevent people-smuggling and irregular migration," Senator Evans said, adding that projects like these help make travel in the region safer and more secure. He said the total cost of the project was about A\$10 million. An additional A\$2.4 million was allocated in 2008-09 to provide support and maintenance of the project until 2010.

Other measures to further enhance regional cooperation on border security were also high on the agenda during the ministers' meeting, which also included the Australian Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Bob Debus MP and senior Australian Government officials.

Evans said Indonesia was a key partner for Australia and the Government was committed to a close, practical working relationship. "We are doing a lot together to improve border security, including through forensic document examination training and initiatives to detect people who seek to travel on fake or altered passports," he said.

He added that Australia and Indonesia were also exploring ways to better share information between them, and with other countries in the region, on immigration issues and trends which would help prevent people-smuggling, human trafficking and other forms of trans-national crime.

Senator Evans said the commitment to mandatory detention along with the excision arrangements and immigration processing at Christmas Island signalled the Australian Government's strong stance against people-smuggling. "The new 400-bed center on Christmas Island is now available for use and people encouraged by people-smugglers to try to improperly enter Australia will be taken to Christmas Island for processing," he said.

The Australian government delegation also met senior representatives of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the regional representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

"A robust immigration program benefits both countries through forging closer people-to-people links and we have seen a steady growth in Indonesian visitors to Australia with nearly 60 000 visitor visas granted last year," Senator Evans said.

MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

[Norway Chips In To Strengthen ASEAN's Role In Humanitarian Efforts](#)

Bernama – 6 August

ASEAN's humanitarian profile has been further strengthened with Norway contributing US\$1 million (RM3.24 million) for humanitarian efforts.

Noting that natural disasters appear to be occurring more frequently in Asia, ASEAN Secretary-General Dr Surin Pitsuwan said the contribution would help ASEAN to enlarge its humanitarian profile in natural disasters in the region.

In his letter to Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store, Surin expressed his sincere appreciation to the Royal Norwegian Government and their people for the contribution.

"Your support and contribution will greatly contribute to the success of ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretariat in the humanitarian endeavour to help our people in need," he said in a statement issued here Wednesday.

In May, Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar, resulting in the most devastating natural disaster in the country's history.

The statement added that the contribution would help support activities by ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretariat for humanitarian relief there.

[China dispatches 95 police as part of peacekeeping mission to Haiti](#)

Xinhua – 6 August

A 95-member back-up team from China's seventh riot squad for the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission left Urumqi, capital of northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, for Haiti on Wednesday.

They will perform an eight-month peacekeeping mission in the Caribbean nation together with a 30-member advance group that left Beijing for Haiti on Monday.

With an average age of 30, the 125 police, including five women, passed tough exams in English, shooting, driving and stamina, according to Liu Yaohua, chief of the regional security bureau.

The squad, mostly border-control police in Xinjiang, will replace the sixth peacekeeping squad that has been in Haiti since December. China has participated in UN peacekeeping missions in Haiti since 2004.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[Moscow says no nuclear weapons in Belarus to counter U.S. shield](#)

RIA Novosti – 6 August

Russia may review military cooperation with Belarus in response to U.S. missile defense plans in Central Europe, but will not return nuclear weapons to the country, the Russian ambassador to Minsk said Wednesday.

The U.S. plans to deploy 10 interceptor missiles in northern Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic as part of a missile shield for Europe and North America against possible attacks from "rogue states," including Iran.

"When Poland signs a treaty with the United States on the deployment of missile defense elements, then we will be in a position to discuss some additional aspects of military cooperation with Belarus," Ambassador Alexander Surikov said.

He added that an array of counter measures would be devised, but there would be "no return of nuclear weapons to Belarus." The envoy said, however, that Russia could deploy Iskander missile-defense systems and strategic bombers in Belarus.

Moscow strongly opposes the possible deployment of the U.S. missile shield, viewing it as a threat to its national security. Russia's Foreign Ministry has said that if U.S. strategic missile defense elements are deployed near Russia's borders, Moscow would be forced to respond with a "military-technical approach" rather than a diplomatic one.