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CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

[NATO 'on top of our game' in Afghanistan: officer](#)

CanWest News Service – 17 September 2007

Reports that NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Canadian military are not faring well in their war against the Taliban are wrong, says the Canadian officer who oversees military intelligence in Afghanistan. In fact, says Brig.-Gen. Jim Ferron, the battlefield successes of Canada and other NATO armies could spur peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. "I don't accept that NATO is on its back foot," Ferron said Monday in his first interview with a Canadian journalist since becoming NATO's chief of intelligence in Afghanistan eight months ago.

[Doubts remain over Darfur force](#)

BBC – 22 September 2007

Talks on Darfur at the UN have ended with disagreement over the deployment of peacekeepers in the troubled Sudanese region. Sudan insists that there are more than enough African troops to deploy, but UN and African Union leaders said there were still unresolved technical issues. Correspondents say not all African troops meet UN standards. Meanwhile a senior US official hinted at sanctions for rebel leaders refusing to go to October's Libya peace talks. UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon co-chaired the meeting with the chairman of the African Union, Alpha Oumar Konare. They also discussed increasing humanitarian assistance to Darfur.

[Iran smuggling missiles into Iraq: US military](#)

AFP – 24 September 2007

Iran is smuggling advanced weapons, including surface-to-air missiles, into Iraq to be used by extremists against American troops, the US military charged on Sunday. US military spokesman Rear Admiral Mark Fox told reporters in Baghdad that Iran was shifting sophisticated arms such as "RPG-29s, explosively-formed penetrators (EFPs), 240 mm rockets and Misagh-1 surface-to-air missiles" across its borders into Iraq. An EFP is a feared roadside bomb which when it explodes emits a white-hot slug of molten copper that can cut through the armoured skins of US military vehicles. Fox reiterated that Iranian national Mahmudi Farhadi, detained on Thursday in the northern province of Sulaimaniyah, is one of the kingpins in the bomb smuggling operations.

[UN Rights Envoy Says Fear Growing in Somalia](#)

VOA News – 21 September 2007

A United Nations human rights expert says people in Somalia are more afraid than ever of being targeted by fighting in the capital, Mogadishu. Ghanim Alnajjar said Friday that civilians are afraid of being killed and of being arrested by insurgents, government troops and Ethiopian forces. He also accused all sides of recruiting children to fight in the conflict. Alnajjar was speaking in Nairobi, Kenya, following a brief trip to Somalia. On

Thursday, he met with Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf and Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi.

COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Scottish Muslim student convicted of Internet terrorist offenses](#)

Associated Press – 17 September 2007

A Muslim student who once threatened to become a suicide bomber was convicted Monday of a series of terrorist offenses. A jury found Mohammed Atif Siddique, 21, of Alva, Scotland, guilty of four counts involving possession and distribution of terrorist material via Web sites and providing instructional material about guns and explosives over the Internet. As a student at Glasgow Metropolitan College, Siddique threatened to become a suicide bomber and blow up Glasgow, and showed images of suicide bombings and beheadings, prosecutors said.

[Mosque visit to tackle terrorism](#)

BBC – 18 September 2007

School children in Clackmannanshire are to be taken to visit local mosques in the wake of the Alva terror trial, BBC Scotland has learned. Education officials in the area hope the scheme will increase understanding of other religions in the community. It was developed after former Alva Academy pupil Mohammed Atif Siddique was accused of terrorism offences. The 21-year-old will be sentenced next month after being found guilty at the High Court in Glasgow. The student was arrested at his family's home in Alva in April 2006.

[Taliban 'terrorist activities' slammed at UN meeting](#)

AFP – 24 September 2007

Participants at a UN-sponsored high-level meeting on Sunday condemned increased "terrorist activities" by the Taliban in Afghanistan and urge Kabul to do more to spur good governance and root out corruption and drug trafficking. A joint communique issued here at the end of the three-hour meeting "unequivocally condemned terrorist and other illegal activities, which hindered the establishment of the rule of law, the provision of basic services to the Afghan people." UN chief Ban Ki-moon, who co-hosted the meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, said participants expressed hope that Afghan leaders "will continue to focus their efforts on good governance and eradicating corruption, drug trafficking." Eighteen countries took part in the meeting which focused on "the increase in violent and terrorist activities by the Taliban, al-Qaeda, illegal armed groups, criminals and those involved in the narcotics trade."

[Pakistan derides bin Laden, but takes threat seriously](#)

Associated Press – 21 September 2007

Osama bin Laden's call for Pakistanis to rise up against their U.S.-allied military leader struck a chord among an angry, extremist minority but resonated little among the wider public and was dismissed by the government Friday as "ridiculous". Still, it could feed into growing debate over whether Pakistan is sacrificing its own stability by supporting Washington's unpopular war on terror. The al-Qaida chief's audio message, released Thursday, urged Pakistanis to wage a jihad or holy war against President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, whose decision to send troops into a pro-Taliban mosque in the capital and against Islamic militants at the Afghan border has stoked an insurgency. The general's representatives on Friday dismissed the idea that many in Pakistan's overwhelmingly Muslim population of 160 million would respond to the latest call to arms.

DEFENCE STRATEGY

[IDF commission to recommend women soldiers serve in all units](#)

Haaretz Service and The Associated Press – 17 September 2007

An internal report to be submitted to the Israel Defense Forces is to recommend sweeping changes regarding the roles of women soldiers, offering equal opportunity to serve in all army units, including elite commando wings, Israel Radio reported Monday. The radio said the study, commissioned by Major-General Elazar Stern, head of the IDF personnel department, also recommended that men and women soldiers serve equal terms of enlisted duty. The IDF said the draft report by a panel of officers and academics was a tool for long term-planning meant to maximize the abilities of the women for the overall benefit of the armed forces. It did not have details of the report's recommendations.

[US Democrats Step Up Pressure for Change of Iraq Policy](#)

Voice of America – 17 September 2007

Democratic congressional leaders made new appeals Monday for minority Republicans to abandon President Bush's military strategy in Iraq. VOA's Dan Robinson reports, one of the president's harshest critics in the House of Representatives shed some more light on his party's legislative approach in coming weeks, as the Senate began consideration of defense legislation and expected Iraq-related amendments. Pennsylvania Democrat John Murtha used a speech at the National Press Club to deliver an in-depth response to the report delivered to Congress last week by U.S. Iraq commander General David Petraeus. Chairman of a key defense appropriations subcommittee, Murtha asserts that rather than taking immediate action to change what he called a flawed policy in Iraq, the president now appears content to run out the clock.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[A High-Tech Defensive Play](#)

CNN Money – 14 September 2007

One fact about military rivalry is that the other guy always gets better. Take China. In January, its space agency completed its first real test of a hunter-killer satellite, designed to destroy other countries' orbital vehicles. The Chinese test amounted to a crude bomb-in-the sky. It pulled up to its target and blew it up in a hail of metal splinters. Before, only the U.S. or Russia could do this. But the fact that China succeeded shows that its military technology is turning a corner - and this involves more than the heavy-metal rockets that put satellites in orbit.

[Iran leader warns West over perils of attack](#)

AFP - 23 September 2007

Iran on Saturday warned the West of the "serious consequences" of launching any attack against the Islamic republic after showing off a new longer-range missile in public for the first time. Iran earlier showed off its military prowess at the annual military parade to mark the start of the 1980-1988 war with Iraq, taunting its arch enemy Israel with a host of slogans calling for the destruction of the Jewish state. A longer range missile labelled Ghadr-1 (Power) -- which had been said to be in development by Western experts -- was shown at the parade for the first time in public. The official announcer at the parade told reporters that the weapon had a range of 1,800 kilometres (1,100 miles), sufficient to put US bases in the Middle East and Iran's arch enemy Israel within reach. The Ghadr missile, which has a "baby bottle" style nose for extra aerodynamic efficiency, is seen as an improved version of Iran's existing longer-range Shahab series, which was also paraded. Officials have said in the past that the Shahab-3 could reach 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles), but the announcer said it had a 1,300-kilometre (800-mile) range.

ENERGY SECURITY

[A new energy crisis? CIBC forecasts oil prices of \\$100 per barrel](#)

Trendwatch – 17 September 2007

CIBC World Markets chief economist Jeff Rubin said that oil prices will increase sharply next year. Oil prices are already at a record level of around \$80 per barrel, but Rubin believes that increasing demand, as well as falling export capacity provided by OPEC, Russia and Mexico will drive the barrel price into the region of \$100 by the end of next year. Rubin said that the export capacity of OPEC, Russia and Mexico will drop by 2.5 million barrels per day as oil producing countries are "cannibalizing" their export capability with domestic demand that is growing at a rate of about 5% per year. "OPEC members together with independent producers Russia and Mexico consume over 12

million barrels per day, surpassing Western Europe to become the second largest oil market in the world," Rubin said.

[U.S. to remove plutonium from 1,000 old atom bombs](#)

Reuters – 17 September 2007

The United States will remove from military stockpiles nine tonnes of plutonium, enough for more than 1,000 atom bombs, to demonstrate its commitment to non-proliferation, the U.S. energy secretary said on Monday. The excess plutonium will be taken out of retired nuclear weapons in coming decades and turned into mixed-oxide fuel burnable in commercial nuclear reactors providing electricity, Samuel Bodman said during a U.N. nuclear watchdog meeting. "As the United States continues to reduce the size of its nuclear weapons stockpile, we will be able to dispose of even more nuclear material while increasing energy and national security," he told a press briefing. The step reflected an accord between the United States and Russia in 2000 under which each was to make 34 tonnes of excess plutonium unusable for nuclear weapons, with the possibility of converting it into a proliferation-proof civilian energy source.

MILITARY OPERATIONS

[Speculation flourishes over Israel's strike on Syria](#)

The Guardian – 17 September 2007

Israel has enforced a news blackout on what may be its air force's most audacious raid since its jets destroyed Saddam Hussein's nuclear reactor in 1981. The Israeli government has made no comment about the raid on what is believed to be a nuclear installation in Syria and Israeli newspapers have been forbidden to write anything on the subject. When asked about the raid, Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister, refused to provide details. "The security services and Israeli defence forces are demonstrating unusual courage. We naturally cannot always show the public our cards."

[Pakistan army, militants cease fire in Afghan border region, officials say](#)

Associated Press – 17 September 2007

Pakistan's army has agreed to a cease-fire with militants holding some 260 soldiers hostage near the Afghan border, officials said Monday. The soldiers were seized Aug. 30 in South Waziristan, a tribal region where pro-Taliban militants hold sway. Fighting between the militants and security forces there has since left scores of people dead. Tribal leaders acting as mediators have managed to establish the cease-fire, said Arbab Arif Khan, the government official responsible for security in Pakistan's troubled tribal belt. "They are now in session with the militants to secure the release of the hostages," Khan said. "We don't yet know what the terms would be."

[British-led forces launch major Afghan operation](#)

Reuters – 19 September 2007

British-led forces launched a major operation in southern Afghanistan on Wednesday, aiming to clear Taliban insurgents from a valley in Helmand -- the most violent province in the country. Some 2,500 troops from the NATO-led force began the operation on Wednesday morning with infantry backed by Warrior armoured vehicles, guided rocket systems, attack helicopters and fighter jets, a spokesman for the British forces in Helmand said. "The purpose of the operation is to continue to remove the Taliban from the area north of Gereshk, to set the conditions whereby the people who live there can start to enjoy security and the government ... can begin to apply governance and development," Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Eaton said. The operation is under British command and most of the troops are British, but the force also includes Afghan soldiers and contingents from the Czech Republic, Estonia and the United States.

['IDF seized nuclear materials in Syria'](#)

Jerusalem Post – 23 September 2007

Soldiers from an elite Israeli unit seized North Korean nuclear material from a secret Syrian military installation before it was bombed by IAF jets, a report by Britain's Sunday Times wrote Saturday night, quoting "informed sources in Washington and Jerusalem." According to the sources, the alleged IAF attack was sanctioned by the US on September 6, after the Americans were given proof that the material was indeed nuclear-related. The sources confirmed that the materials were tested after they were taken from Syria and were found to be of North Korean origin, which raised concerns that Syria may have been trying to come into the possession of nuclear arms.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[More Nations Back U.S. Nuclear Project](#)

Associated Press – 17 September 2007

A U.S.-initiated project that aims to reduce the dangers of nuclear proliferation and control radioactive waste gained support Sunday, as 11 more nations signed on with original members Russia, China, France and Japan. Under the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, a limited number of countries including the U.S. and Russia would provide uranium fuel to other nations for powering reactors to generate electricity, and then retrieve the fuel for reprocessing. This would deprive those nations of their own nuclear fuel enrichment programs, which can be used to make atomic arms. The dangers of uranium enrichment have come into sharp focus over the past four years because of the international standoff with Iran, which has defied a U.N. Security Council demand that it freeze development of the activity.

[Force is last resort in Iranian crisis: nuclear chief](#)

AFP – 18 September 2007

UN atomic energy chief Mohamed ElBaradei said Monday that force should not be used yet to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis, dismissing talk of war as "a lot of hype". "We need always to remember that use of force could only be resorted to when ... every other option has been exhausted. I don't think we are at all there," the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director general told reporters. "There is a UN charter and there are rules for the international use of force. "I hope everybody would have gotten the lesson after the Iraq situation when we see a drama unfolding every day," ElBaradei said, adding that hundreds of thousands of "innocent civilians have lost their lives on the suspicion that a country had nuclear weapons."

[Vietnam sends highly enriched uranium to Russia](#)

AFP – 18 September 2007

Vietnam has sent a shipment of highly enriched uranium used at its Soviet-built Dalat research reactor to Russia as part of a fuel conversion plan agreed with the United States, an official said Monday. The shipment -- of an unspecified size -- was sent last week, according to an official at the Vietnamese Atomic Energy Commission, who asked not to be named. In March, the United States announced a plan to help the communist state switch to the use of non-weapons-grade uranium fuel in the Dalat reactor, located about 250 kilometres (150 miles) northeast of Ho Chi Minh City. The deal called for a switch from highly enriched to low-enriched uranium fuel at Dalat. Vietnam would also "move forward with the repatriation of Russian-origin highly enriched uranium fuel" under an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said a statement issued by the US embassy in March.

[Talks to push N. Korea to nuclear disablement](#)

Reuters – 28 September 2007

Talks on disarming North Korea aim to lay out a roadmap for disabling the country's nuclear programmes, the United States envoy said on Friday, but conceded there was not yet agreement on even defining the term. Under an accord reached in Feb, North Korea must disable its atomic facilities and make a complete declaration of all its nuclear programmes. In return the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), will receive a massive injection of fuel aid. "The DPRK has agreed to some steps and I think we've looked at what they've agreed to and, frankly, we'd like more and they'd like less and lets see what we end up with," US negotiator Christopher Hill told reporters.