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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

[Iraq reserves right to hold Blackwater trial](#)

Khaleej Times – 17 August

Iraq on Sunday said it reserves the right to put on trial six guards working for private security firm Blackwater USA for their alleged role in the killing of 17 Iraqi civilians in Baghdad last year. ‘There is information that half a dozen Blackwater guards who have been accused of shooting and killing 17 Iraqis are to be tried in Washington,’ government spokesman Ali Al Dabbagh told reporters. ‘The Iraqi government stresses its rights and that Blackwater guards have committed crimes against Iraqi victims. The government reserves the right to prosecute them,’ he said.

Last September 16, Blackwater guards shot dead 17 Iraqi civilians while escorting an American diplomatic convoy through Baghdad. The firm says its guards were acting in self-defence. Dabbagh's comment came after the Washington Post reported on Saturday that six Blackwater guards had received ‘target letters’ from the US Justice Department in a probe of the shootings. Such letters are often considered a prelude to indictment, the report said, adding that the guards were former US military personnel.

The report said any charges against the men would likely be brought under the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act, which has previously been used to prosecute only the cases referred to the Justice Department by the Pentagon for crimes committed by military personnel and contractors overseas. Despite strong opposition, the US Department of State earlier this year renewed a contract with Blackwater to protect American officials in Iraq. Foreign security companies are currently not subject to Iraq law, but they are not governed by US military tribunals either, effectively allowing them to operate with impunity.

Among the sticking points in complex negotiations aimed at striking a new US-Iraqi security deal has been the issue of whether and what immunity US troops should continue to have. Dabbagh reiterated Iraq's position that security companies' guards would not be exempt from prosecution. ‘The Iraqi government will not allow any security company to have immunity in Iraq,’ he said.

Baghdad and Washington are still negotiating an agreement that would govern US troop levels and allow them to operate in the country after a UN mandate expires at the end of the year. US President George W. Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki agreed in principle last November to sign a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) by the end of July, but controversy has delayed the arrangement.

Iraqis fiercely oppose a large American troop presence on their soil, but at the same time want a guarantee that Washington will defend the country from foreign invasion. The proposed pact has drawn sharp criticism from Iraq's various political factions, especially from anti-American cleric Moqtada Sadr, a Shia who demands a deadline for US troops. Sadr, whose 60,000-strong Mahdi Army has battled US forces numerous times, said he

was willing to demilitarise the militia if a security pact between Baghdad and Washington provides for an American withdrawal.

The White House has so far refused to commit to a fixed date for withdrawing US combat troops, but has suggested a series of target dates for giving Iraqis control over security in different parts of the war-torn country. About 142,500 American troops remain in Iraq, and the issue is increasingly politically sensitive in Washington as the November US presidential election draws near.

[Turkish warplanes hit Kurdish rebel target in Iraq](#)

Seattle PI – 17 August

Turkish warplanes hit a suspected Kurdish rebel target in northern Iraq, Turkey's military said Sunday. The cross-border air assault targeted a rebel shelter late Saturday where a group of PKK Kurdish rebels was believed to have gathered before a planned attack in Turkey, the military said on its Web site. The military provided no casualty figures.

The reported air raid on the Avasin-Basyan region of Iraq could not independently be confirmed. Turkey's military has launched several air strikes and one ground incursion targeting the PKK rebel safe havens in northern Iraq since the parliament authorized cross-border military moves following a surge in PKK ambushes inside Turkey late last year. The United States is sharing intelligence with Turkey on the rebels, who maintain bases in Iraq that serve as a launch pad for attacks on targets inside Turkey.

Turkey also has coordinated simultaneous attacks on the rebels with neighboring Iran, which is fighting against PEJAK, the PKK's Iranian wing. The rebel group is fighting for self-rule in parts of Turkey's east and southeast. Tens of thousands of people have died in the fighting. Majority Kurds in northern Iraqi cities such as Kirkuk, the center of Iraq's northern oil fields, also want to annex it and surrounding Tamim province into a self-ruled region.

[Hamas, PFLP reject deploying Arab forces in Gaza](#)

Xinhua – 19 August

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) rejected on Tuesday a proposal to deploy Arab security forces in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

Ayman Taha, Hamas spokesman in Gaza told reporters that the idea of sending Arab security forces to the Gaza Strip "is rejected and not accepted because the priority is to succeed the comprehensive dialogue first." "If the dialogue among all the Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas succeeds, and the parties achieve a status of national accord among them, so we believe that there is no need for Arab forces to Gaza," said Taha.

Egypt is determined to invite next week leaders of Palestinian factions and political groups to Cairo to hold bilateral talks with each faction to prepare for a comprehensive national Palestinian dialogue. Taha said that Hamas movement has sent a "positive response" to Egypt this week to a paper sent by Egypt to all Palestinian factions that includes three basic questions related to the resumption of the inter-Palestinian dialogue.

Meanwhile, Jamil al-Majdalawi, a senior PFLP leader said in a written statement that his group rejects the idea of bringing Arab security forces to the Gaza Strip "because the idea doesn't serve the interests of the Palestinians." Gaza Strip has been witnessing active meetings and talks, where several Palestinian factions held recent separate meetings with rival Hamas and Fatah leaders in Gaza.

The results of the meetings were described as positive. Al-Majdalawi said that following intensive meetings with rival Fatah and Hamas leaders in Gaza, "it was agreed in principle to free all political prisoners in Gaza and West Bank prisons."

[Afghan ambush kills French troops](#)

BBC – 19 August

Ten French soldiers have been killed in an ambush by Taleban fighters east of the Afghan capital, Kabul. A further 21 French troops were wounded in one of the heaviest tolls suffered by the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf). French President Nicolas Sarkozy has announced he will travel to Kabul to assure troops of his support. The deaths come amid warnings that insurgents are closing in on the capital city. The loss of life is thought to be the heaviest suffered by the French military since 58 paratroopers were killed in Beirut in 1983.

The BBC's Emma-Jane Kirby, in Paris, says news of the deaths is bound to provoke anger in France, where about two-thirds of people say they are opposed to any French involvement in the conflict. But President Sarkozy insisted France remained committed to the fight against terrorism, and that the mission in Afghanistan would continue.

The French troops were caught up in fighting that started on Monday in the area of Sarobi some 50 km (30 miles) east of Kabul. French defence officials said about 100 soldiers - from France, the US and Afghanistan - were on a reconnaissance mission when bad road conditions forced them to stop their vehicles. A group of French soldiers was sent ahead on foot to check the terrain, but they were ambushed by Taleban fighters and nine were killed. A tenth French soldier was killed when his vehicle overturned on the road.

An Afghan intelligence officer told the BBC the troops had been ambushed from several directions. "The Taleban and al-Qaeda forces used heavy machine guns and other weapons. They fired from mountains and gardens," he said. The fighting went on for 24 hours and it is understood that reinforcements had to be called in to airlift the troops to safety. The French recently took over control of the Kabul regional command which includes Sarobi.

France has about 3,000 troops deployed in Afghanistan. The French news agency AFP reported that Tuesday's deaths brought to 24 the number killed since 2002. Leaders from countries including the UK and Italy - both of which have sizeable troop deployments in Afghanistan - paid tribute to the French soldiers. "Theirs was a sacrifice not just for France but for all of us who want to help the Afghan people build a better future," said UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi said the soldiers had died "defending democracy and freedom in Afghanistan".

The ambush came amid signs of deteriorating security in Afghanistan. Despite increased security in Kabul, two rockets were fired on the city overnight, landing close to the Isaf headquarters. In the southern province of Kandahar a Nato patrol was struck by a roadside bomb. And in the south-eastern province of Khost six suicide bombers were killed while attacking a Nato military base, Camp Salerno, Nato says. Isaf confirmed that Camp Salerno had been attacked by rockets or mortars, and that a number of suicide bombers had tried to storm the base. On Monday, nine Afghan civilians were killed when a suicide bomber rammed a car into the gate of the same base.

[Army chief turns down negotiation with Pulo](#)

Bangkok Post – 19 August

The Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, Gen Anupong Paochinda, said it is not his authority to negotiate with the Pattani United Liberation Organisation, a militant group from the 1980s conflict in the deep South. He said it is up to the government.

After several insurgents claiming to be Pulo members offered to negotiate with the Thai authority to end the regional unrest, Gen Anupong said he could not accept their proposal as they are breaking the law and the security forces need to put them on trial. The national army chief said civil servants, police and military officials are evaluating the southern situation and coordinating with each other continually.

As for the locals in the three southern border provinces, Gen Anupong said they are happy with the current security measures. However, he said if the situation does not improve, they would have to be fine-tuned accordingly.

[Pentagon Plans to Send More Than 12,000 Additional Troops to Afghanistan](#)

U.S. News – 19 August

The Pentagon will be sending 12,000 to 15,000 additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan, possibly as soon as the end of this year, with planning underway for a further force buildup in 2009. A request by Gen. David McKiernan, the commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, for three U.S. brigades with support staff has been approved. "Now that means we just need to figure out a way to get them there," adds a senior defense official.

The troops are slated to arrive earlier than has been previously discussed, on the heels of the deadliest months for American forces in Afghanistan since the war began. The first

wave of soldiers will be a U.S. Army brigade from the 10th Mountain Division, according to a senior military official. This brigade is scheduled to ship out between November and January, while two other brigades are likely to arrive "sometime in the spring or summer of next year," the official adds.

And there may be even more to come. "I've also asked for some additional forces on top of that for the current fight," says McKiernan, who wants to bolster the 101st Airborne Division in Regional Command East, which has been rocked by recent insurgent attacks. In July, nine U.S. troops were killed by insurgents who overran a combat outpost on the Kunar border of eastern Afghanistan. This week, militants tried but failed to overrun a base in Khost, just a few miles from the border, launching waves of attacks just before midnight on Monday.

Finding those particular troops to supplement the 101st, however, depends on conditions and troop levels in Iraq, adds McKiernan, who took over the NATO command in June. "That's really a zero-sum decision." He disputes the notion that the three brigades on the way represent a troop "surge" for Afghanistan, predicting the need for an extended involvement of a larger force. "I've certainly said that we need more security capabilities," he says. "But I would not use the term 'surge,' because I think we need a sustained presence."

Both major U.S. presidential candidates have called for putting a greater military emphasis on Afghanistan, and it now appears that whoever wins the election will inherit a growing war already underway. In March, 3,500 troops from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit arrived to bolster NATO forces. Originally slated to return to the U.S. in October, they have seen their tour extended by one month. The three additional brigades would considerably increase the U.S. force presence in Afghanistan, which currently stands at 34,000. Of these, 15,000 U.S. troops are under NATO command, while an additional 19,000 operate independently, primarily in the volatile eastern border region.

There has been growing concern that there are too few NATO troops to take on an emboldened Taliban. In some cases, the warlords directing attacks on American forces are the same ones the CIA backed in the 1980s when they fought Soviet troops occupying Afghanistan. Some U.S. military officials express skepticism, however, about the impact more U.S. troops can make seven years into the war, in a large country that has grown increasingly violent—with citizens, they add, who are increasingly disillusioned. "I don't know if it's too late," says a senior military official. "But it's going to be much, much harder to turn things around at this point."

U.S. military officials are particularly concerned about the sharp spike in roadside bombs, up "30 to 40 percent" over last year, says McKiernan. "It's the largest casualty-producing event in Afghanistan." Causing that spike is what McKiernan describes as the "deteriorating condition" of the ungoverned tribal areas of Pakistan, with a porous border that facilitates the planting of such bombs. Clearing up ungoverned lands rife with insurgents in Pakistan, McKiernan says, is pivotal to improving security in Afghanistan.

"We have a cross-border firing incident out of Pakistan almost daily, and unfortunately those aren't diminishing," he adds. "There are militant sanctuaries in Pakistan, and they operate at will."

[Talks in peril as Philippine troops step up hunt for rebels](#)

Channel NewsAsia – 19 August

Troops on Tuesday stepped up the manhunt for Muslim separatist rebels after a murderous rampage in the southern Philippines left 30 people dead and threw peace negotiations into chaos. Hundreds of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels attacked towns in Lanao del Norte and Sarangani provinces Monday, looting business, burning houses and holding dozens hostage.

The near-simultaneous raids began at dawn, triggering intense gunbattles in the mostly Christian towns of Kolambugan and Kauswagan that raged until noon. At least 29 civilians and three soldiers were killed, dozens injured and nearly 10,000 displaced by the fighting. Officials say the toll could rise further with some residents still missing.

President Gloria Arroyo's spokesman Jesus Dureza on Tuesday called for calm, but admitted peace talks with the MILF were now in peril. "We're very sorry and we're very saddened by this," Dureza said in Manila. "I compare this (the talks) to a shattered glass, it would be very difficult to put the pieces together." He stressed however that "peace is the only option for us."

Military vice chief of staff Lieutenant General Cardoso Luna said troop reinforcements have been sent to the area to go after the rebels, who had escaped into nearby woodlands. "We have already freed the towns. We are on pursuit operations. We will not stop until we catch up with them," said Luna, who was leading the operations on the ground.

Kolambugan mayor Beltran Lumaque, whose town was the most heavily hit area, said: "They killed innocent, defenceless civilians. People are traumatised. We need food, medicines. We want the soldiers here." He said the rebels freed late Monday eight more people they had seized to use as "human shields" against pursuing troops.

MILF rebels also ambushed on Sunday a military convoy, killing four soldiers and three pro-government militiamen. The MILF signed a ceasefire agreement with Manila in 2003 which opened the way for peace talks. However, on August 4 the Supreme Court halted a deal that would have expanded a Muslim autonomous area in the south to favour the MILF. The towns attacked on Monday had opposed the proposed deal.

Arroyo condemned the attacks as "sneaky and treacherous" and ordered her troops to "defend every inch" of the Philippines. She assured the public the government "will defend them at all costs against any move by any group that will disrupt our aspirations for a genuine and lasting peace" in Mindanao, where the MILF's 30 year rebellion has left over 120,000 dead.

MILF spokesman Mohagher Iqbal said the rebel leadership still held "primacy of the peace process" and said those who attacked belonged to a faction that were frustrated with the aborted land deal. "This is a consequence of the non-movement of the peace process," he said. The MILF leadership was moving to restrain fighters on the ground, Iqbal said, although he said he could not assure attacks would immediately stop.

[TU-95 bombers returned from conflict zone to permanent locations](#)

ITAR-TASS – 19 August

TU-95 bombers returned from conflict zone to permanent locations - General Staff Russian reinforcements attached to the peacekeepers in South Ossetia continue to be pulled back, and this operation will be speeded up after August 22, the deputy chief of Russia's General Staff, Colonel-General Anatoly Nogovitsin, told a news briefing on Tuesday.

In general, he described the situations in the conflict zones as complicated. "Georgian forces are restoring their combat readiness. Active preparations are underway for acts of sabotage against Russian troops and civilians in South Ossetia. This statement of mine reflects the real situation," Nogovitsin said.

About progress in the pullback operation Nogovitsin said that units of the 20th mechanized infantry division were returning to the barracks. "The remaining units are protecting the administrative border of South Ossetia and creating infrastructures for additional peacekeeper force posts," he said.

[Moscow Says NATO 'Protecting' Georgia's Saakashvili](#)

RIA Novosti – 19 August

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday that NATO had taken Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili under its protection. NATO foreign ministers said after talks earlier Tuesday that the alliance was freezing contacts with Russia until it pulled its troops out of Georgia.

"The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has in fact taken Saakashvili under its protection," Lavrov said, adding that NATO had taken a biased position on the conflict in South Ossetia. He said getting Georgia involved in NATO activities results from anti-Russian sentiments in the military alliance.

Lavrov said the encouragement for Georgia joining NATO "is dictated by an intention which I cannot describe as being anything but anti-Russian and supportive of the aggressive regime." He warned that Moscow would draw appropriate conclusions from NATO's pro-Georgian stance. "To be sure, there will be consequences. There will evidently be no business as usual, as we said a week ago... I think that we will draw appropriate conclusions," he said. He said the Russia-NATO Council was not established to "lecture to Russia" on how to behave with regard to Georgia, but to ensure security in

Europe and the Euro-Atlantic region. He stressed that Russia stands by the six-point peace plan and will fully comply with it.

Russia came under severe criticism from NATO countries, notably the United States and Britain, after its major operation to expel Georgian forces from South Ossetia, and its peace enforcement mission in areas of Georgia proper. A joint declaration after the NATO ministerial talks in Brussels said: "We have determined that we cannot continue with business as usual" with Russia, and that the alliance "is considering seriously the implications of Russia's actions for the NATO-Russia relationship." NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said: "The future of our relations with Russia will depend on the concrete actions Russia will take to abide by the words of President Dmitry Medvedev... which is not happening at the moment."

Russian troops are widely reported to remain in parts of Georgia, including the town of Gori, despite a pledge by President Medvedev that they would begin pulling out from the South Caucasus state on Monday. Scheffer said the bloc had suspended Russia-NATO Council sessions at all levels until Moscow fully complies with the peace plan.

Lavrov said he agreed with the NATO chief's assessment that "business as usual" could not continue. "We said this a week ago - when NATO representatives came forward with biased assessments, we made the necessary conclusions." "NATO is trying to turn an aggressor into a victim, is attempting to whitewash a criminal regime and save a fallen regime, and is taking a course toward re-arming the current Georgian leaders," the diplomat said.

Georgia's bid to join NATO was rebuffed at the alliance's April summit in Bucharest. However, the NATO ministers on Tuesday decided to create a joint NATO-Georgia commission similar to that already in place with Ukraine, and reaffirmed their plans to eventually accept Georgia as a NATO member. Soon after the NATO declaration, Russia announced that it would not participate in the NATO-led Open Spirit 2008 naval exercise in the Baltic Sea, and would refuse to receive a U.S. warship in the Far East port of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.

[Nato tells Russia: no 'new line' in Europe](#)

Financial Times – 19 August

Nato warned Russia on Tuesday that it could not draw a "new line" in Europe preventing Georgia and other countries from joining the western military alliance if they wished to do so. Meeting in emergency session in Brussels, the western military alliance's 26 foreign ministers also suspended regular top-level ties with Russia, saying that "business as usual" could not continue while Russian troops remained in Georgia.

Expressing their strong support for Georgia's independence in one of the most serious disputes between the west and Russia since the end of the cold war, Nato members agreed to establish a permanent commission with the embattled Caucasian country, which

is desperate to join the western alliance. Nato is also sending 15 civil emergency experts to Georgia to ease conditions for an estimated 150,000 refugees.

Condoleezza Rice, US secretary of state, insisted that Moscow could not divide those countries that had already entered Nato from those that still aspired to do so. "There will absolutely be no new line. Nato does not accept that there is a new line, and we are acting as if there is no new line," she said, evoking the Iron Curtain that divided Nato from the Soviet bloc during the cold war. "Nato intends to support the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Georgia and to support its democratically-elected government, and to deny Russia the strategic objective of undermining that democracy and making Georgia weaker," she said.

Earlier, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Nato's secretary-general, called on Moscow to withdraw all its military forces in Georgia to the positions they occupied on August 6, the day before the military confrontation erupted. A Nato statement added that Russian military action had been "disproportionate and inconsistent with its peacekeeping role" in parts of Georgia.

Russia began withdrawing military units from parts of Georgia on Tuesday in accordance with a six-point ceasefire agreement brokered by the European Union. The Kremlin quoted Russia's president, Dmitry Medvedev, as telling Nicolas Sarkozy, his French counterpart by telephone that most Russian forces would withdraw to Russia or to South Ossetia by August 22, leaving some troops in a buffer zone around the breakaway region. However, Russian officials reacted furiously to Nato's criticisms and its declaration of support for Georgia's eventual membership.

Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's representative to Nato, said that the west was hypocritical in condemning Moscow for its aggression while supporting Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia's president. Mr Rogozin condemned Mr Saakashvili as a "war criminal" who had bombarded civilians and Russian soldiers in South Ossetia, provoking Moscow's intervention. Mr Rogozin added that if Nato had already accepted Georgia as a full member, then the western alliance and Russia would now be at war. "Are you ready to risk your prosperity and risk your lives and the lives of your children for the sake of Saakashvili?" Mr Rogozin asked correspondents in Brussels.

Ms Rice said the US – and Nato – had no desire to isolate Russia. But she added that Russia's incursion into Georgia and the bombing of civilian targets was isolating Russia from the world. "There can be no business as usual with Russia while this kind of activity goes on," she said.

At the United Nations, Russia rejected a Security Council resolution calling for its immediate withdrawal from Georgia. The draft text had referred to "the territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders".

Russia Stages a Substantial Withdrawal

Washington Post – 23 August

Russia pulled troops and armored vehicles out of vast swaths of seized territory and ended its 10-day occupation of this Georgian city Friday, but Georgian and foreign officials disputed Russia's claim that it had complied with the terms of a recent cease-fire agreement. Columns of Russian trucks, tanks and artillery pieces rumbled north throughout the day toward the breakaway territories whose disputed status sparked the current crisis. Just before leaving Gori at 8 p.m., Russian forces detonated giant explosions on various Georgian armories and military installations that spewed flames and black smoke into the sky.

The Russian withdrawal was a major step toward ending the slow-burning conflict that ignited into full-scale war Aug. 7 when the Georgian army invaded South Ossetia. Russian forces responded swiftly and sharply, seizing as much as a third of Georgian land. But the Russian retreat now underway leaves many contentious issues unresolved, including the future deployment of thousands of Russian soldiers and South Ossetian militiamen aligned with them who remain in undisputed Georgian territory. Whether the disputed territories -- South Ossetia and Abkhazia on the Black Sea coast -- will remain part of Georgia, seek independence or be annexed by Russia is also unclear.

"I think what happened today is encouraging but unacceptable until the last Russian soldier leaves my country," Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said in a telephone interview late Friday. "What they are still doing, making explosions, camping by the road, digging positions, does not look to me like cease-fire. It looks like warfare." Officials in the United States, which along with several European countries has pressured Russia to leave Georgia, agreed. "We are not seeing that they are in compliance right now," White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said at a briefing in Crawford, Tex., where President Bush is spending time at his ranch. "They have not completely withdrawn from areas considered undisputed territories, and they need to do it."

Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov told reporters Friday night in the southern Russian city of Sochi that the Russian withdrawal had been completed "without incident and according to schedule." Under the terms of the cease-fire brokered by French President Nicolas Sarkozy more than a week ago, Russian forces were supposed to return immediately to the pre-conflict boundaries, though Russia says the accord also allows its forces to monitor the conflict zone.

Georgian officials see little distinction between Russian peacekeepers and Russian soldiers. In the western part of Georgia, Russian soldiers continued to man checkpoints near the port in the city of Poti and remained on a military base at Senaki, about 30 miles south of the border with the disputed territory of Abkhazia, Georgian officials said. In the east, Russian forces abandoned posts on the key trade corridor linking the capital, Tbilisi, with central Georgia but retreated only to the village of Karaleta, two miles north of Gori -- the largest city held during the occupation. From there, they continued to man

checkpoints and field camps along the main highway running north toward South Ossetia.

Russia says such checkpoints will eventually be manned by Russian peacekeepers, distinguishable from regular soldiers by their blue armbands bearing the letters "MC," the Russian initials for peacekeeping forces. But the uniforms worn by newly arrived Russian troops Friday evening bore no such insignia. The troops quickly settled into makeshift, roadside camps behind five-foot berms and concertina wire. "We'll get the patches tomorrow," one soldier said, smiling as he responded to a reporter's question

Dozens of Georgian police officers crammed into white-and-blue pickup trucks rushing into Gori at dusk, establishing checkpoints at the main entry points to the city and waving triumphantly as they toured the streets. "Check all the cars coming in or out, but if you notice any Russian military vehicles leaving, just let them pass," David Rabusadze, head of the regional police force, told his charges as they took their positions in the road.

But in the town of Akhagori, far from the combat zone and only a 45-minute drive northwest from Tbilisi, the Russian soldiers who departed after manning a checkpoint for the past week were quickly replaced by South Ossetian militiamen, who roamed the streets in armored vehicles bearing the South Ossetian flag. Georgian officials and civilians have accused the militias of killings during the Russian occupation.

"My men are gone, and Akhagori is now in the hands of Ossetian rebels," a Russian colonel, who declined to give his name, said as he left the city in a green jeep. Nine militiamen, wearing pieces of military uniforms and carrying Kalashnikov rifles, stood sentry on the main road into town. Asked how long they would stay, one man, who identified himself only as the checkpoint commander, said: "This is our land; we'll stay as long as we want. Basically, it is ours from now on." He added, "We have not mistreated a single Georgian in town, and we will not," as a man standing beside him sheathed and unsheathed a six-inch knife.

Inside the ethnically mixed Georgian and Ossetian town, dozens of militiamen milled about the main square, centered on a statue of Saint George. The fighters said they considered Akhagori the border of their rightful territory and would not go farther. There will not be a minute of peace as long as they stay here," said Gia Shermadini, a Georgian resident of a neighboring village. "We will devour each other."

Hours later, in Gori, Russian soldiers had all but vanished. Residents gathered in the streets and debated what would come next. "Thank God they are leaving, but now it is time for the Georgian government to bring something to the people, not war," said Sophia Davitashvili, 56. "Georgia was only defending its rightful territory from Russian aggression," replied a neighbor, Khatuna Khvedelidze, 43.

Moments before departing, Russian Gen. Vyacheslav Borisov, who on Friday was replaced as the top commander in the region, chatted with priests outside St. Mary's, the largest Orthodox church in the city. "In my mind, I am already gone to Tskhinvali," he

said, referring to the South Ossetian capital, which bore the brunt of the initial Georgian assault. "I am the last one left here. Just checking on things." From a tattered, white plastic shopping bag, he presented a gift to the high priest: a blue and white striped Russian paratrooper undershirt. Then he was on his way.

[Russia cruiser to test weapons in crowded Black Sea](#)

Washington Post – 25 August

Russia's flagship cruiser re-entered the Black Sea on Monday for weapons tests hours after the Russian military complained about the presence of U.S. and other NATO naval ships near the Georgian coast. The "Moskva" had led a battle group of Russian naval vessels stationed off the coastline of Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia during Russia's recent conflict with Georgia and sank smaller Georgian craft.

The assistant to the Russian Navy's commander-in-chief told Russian news agencies the cruiser had put to sea again two days after returning to its base at the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol. "'Moskva' has today departed toward the Black Sea Fleet's naval training range to check its radio-controlled weapons and onboard communications systems," Captain Igor Dygalo was quoted as saying by Interfax. The Russian navy's press office was unable to confirm his comments when contacted by Reuters.

The presence of so many ships from NATO countries earlier drew the ire of a Russian military spokesman during a daily media briefing on the conflict. "The fact that there are nine Western warships in the Black Sea cannot but be a cause for concern. They include two U.S. warships, one each from Spain and Poland, and four from Turkey," Anatoly Nogovitsyn, the deputy chief of the Russian military's General Staff said.

On Sunday, the U.S. guided missile destroyer USS McFaul arrived with aid including camp beds, bedding, tents and mobile kitchen units, the U.S. Defense Department spokesman Bryan. Whitman said. Separately, the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Dallas has been dispatched with aid, while a third vessel, the Navy command ship USS Mount Whitney, is being loaded in Italy with humanitarian supplies for Georgia, he said.

The NATO ships in the Black Sea are carrying more than 100 'Tomahawk' cruise missiles, with more than 50 onboard the USS McFaul alone that could hit ground targets, reported RIA news agency, quoting unnamed sources in Russian military intelligence.

[89 Afghan civilians die in 'tragic' US air strike](#)

The Times – 25 August

President Karzai accused Afghan and US led coalition forces yesterday of killing at least 89 civilians in an attack in the western province of Herat in what could be one of the worst cases of "collateral damage" in Afghanistan since 2001. The US military said that 25 militants and five civilians, including two children, were killed in the ground attack and airstrike on Friday, and added that it was investigating reports of further noncombatant casualties. An Afghan minister who visited the area put the civilian death

toll at 90, a human rights group at the scene estimated it at 78 and the Interior Ministry reported 76 noncombatants dead, including 50 children.

A statement from President Karzai said: “In the tragic air strike and irresponsible and imprecise military operation in Azizabad village. . . more than 89 of our innocent countrymen, including women and children, were martyred.” Humayun Hamidzada, a spokesman for Mr Karzai, told The Times: “President Karzai strongly condemns this and has ordered a thorough investigation.” The President had dismissed General Jalandar Shah Behnam, the Afghan National Army general in charge of western Afghanistan, as well as a major in charge of Afghan commandos, he said.

Civilian casualties, especially from airstrikes, are among the main causes of friction between President Karzai and his Western backers — and fuel public antipathy towards both. Almost 700 civilians were killed in the first six months of this year, 255 of them by Afghan government and international troops, and the rest by Taleban militants, according to the UN.

Friday’s attack involved US led coalition forces, which mainly hunt al-Qaeda, as opposed to the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force, which is mainly fighting the Taleban and has stricter rules of engagement. A coalition spokesman told The Times that the operation was led by Afghan National Army commandos with air and ground support from the coalition, including a US C130 gunship overhead.

The coalition forces were trying to detain Mullah Siddiq, a mid-level Taleban commander in the area, who was presiding over a gathering of militants in the district of Shindad, said First Lieutenant Nathan Perry. They were ambushed as they approached the target and pursued their assailants back to the compound, before calling in an airstrike from the C130, Lieutenant Perry said. Afghan and foreign troops on the ground checked the battlefield afterwards and reported initially that 30 militants had been killed, including Mullah Siddiq, without any civilian deaths, he said. However, later on Friday they reported five civilian deaths — three women and two children believed to be Mullah Siddiq’s family.

The attacks sparked angry protests on Saturday from locals, who set fire to a police vehicle and waved banners reading “Death to America”. Local officials said many of the dead had gathered to mark the 40th day since the killing of a militia commander. A council of religious leaders for western Afghanistan demanded yesterday that those behind the attack be put on trial and said it would call a demonstration in Herat today. It said in a statement: “Once again the enemies of Islam have stained their hands with the blood of innocent people. We, the Muslim nation, will not accept their apologies this time.”

[Pakistan government bans Taleban](#)

BBC – 25 August

Pakistan has banned the Taleban militant group which has been behind many suicide attacks in the country since 2007. The Tehreek-e-Taleban Pakistan (TTP) will have its bank accounts and assets frozen, the interior ministry said. The militants said the ban would have no effect on their current policies. Last week the Taleban claimed responsibility for an attack on a munitions plant in Punjab province in which 67 people were killed.

The TTP is a loose grouping of militants headed by Baitullah Mehsud, who is based in Pakistan's South Waziristan tribal district on Afghanistan's border. The ban on the Taleban comes a day after the man likely to be Pakistan's next president, Asif Ali Zardari, advocated such a move in a BBC interview.

"We have banned Tehreek-e-Taleban Pakistan because of their involvement in a series of suicide attacks," interior ministry chief Rehman Malik said. "They themselves have claimed responsibility for several suicide attacks and the government cannot engage in a dialogue with such people," he said. Mr Malik said the Taleban had "created mayhem against the public life".

A ministry official told the BBC that the state bank had been asked to freeze any accounts the organisation might have. A spokesman for Pakistani Taleban, Maulvi Omar, said the ban would only make them stronger. "No, we do not have any accounts," he said. "We have no assets or any relationships with any banks. We have no need... we do very well on our own." He continued: "As long as the Pakistan army continues its operation against us, we will remain united and together. "In fact the ban will bring greater unity and will force more groups to join us. We will continue our current policies come what may."

Pakistan's Taleban is fighting for an Islamic state and the militants see it as their religious duty to fight the international forces currently in Afghanistan, says the BBC's Charles Haviland in Islamabad. Meeting journalists in May, Baitullah Mehsud said his organisation did not want to fight Pakistan's army, but that it was being forced to do so because the army were "slaves to US demands".

There have been a number of local ceasefire deals with the Taleban and other militants but none have been successful in stopping the violence or preventing incursions into Afghanistan, our correspondent says.

[Philippine army seizes 15 rebel camps in conflict-torn south](#)

Xinhua – 25 August

Philippine army chief on Monday said government forces have already seized at least 15 camps and villages of the country's largest Muslim rebel group in southern region of Mindanao as skirmishes between the military and the rebel group escalated over the past few days.

In a joint press conference with Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., Armed Forces chief Gen. Alexander Yano said some of the captured are actually communities which the rebels of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) had turned into fortresses. He said the camps and villages were captured during the last 72 hours. Yano also revealed that the MILF resistance against the pursuing troops is now waning compared to last week when he said MILF forces engaged soldiers in heavy fighting. He said the clashes that are reported on the ground are mere "sporadic."

On Sunday afternoon, troops also overran a satellite post of the rebels in Maasim, Sarangani province. The military launched an offensive against the MILF Monday last week, shortly after hundreds of rebels attacked Iligan City and four Lanao del Norte towns that left 28 civilians, three soldiers -- including a lieutenant colonel -- and a policeman dead.

Nevertheless, Yano did not say how many rebel camps the military intend to overrun, saying he is not that concerned about the seized camps. He said they are pursuing personalities led by field Commander Kato and Commander Bravo, leaders of the MILF's 105th and 102nd Base Commands. Yano said that the military has received raw information that other MILF bases are attempting to reinforce or have actually reinforced the group of Kato and Bravo. By Monday, the military reported that at least 22 government troopers, including five militiamen, have died and 66 others were injured in the offensive. The fighting has also affected 48,089 families or 240,296 persons.

The 12,000-strong MILF have been fighting for self-rule since 1978 and signed a ceasefire with the government in 2003. The peace talks between the government and the rebel group have been on and off over the past years. Violence has escalated in the southern Philippines over the past weeks after a territorial pact, scheduled for Aug. 5 to have been inked between the government and the MILF, was suspended by the Supreme Court on the eve of signing.

[EU considers sanctions on Russia](#)

BBC – 28 August

European Union leaders are considering imposing sanctions on Russia over the crisis in Georgia, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner has said. He gave no further details but added "this will be solved by negotiation".

Moscow's recognition of independence for Georgia's breakaway enclaves has been condemned by the West. But Russia's president says he has the support of China and four central Asian states for its actions in Georgia, sending "a serious signal" to the West. Speaking at a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said the grouping's united position would have "international resonance".

"I hope it will serve as a serious signal to those who try to turn black into white and justify this aggression," he said in the Tajik capital, Dushanbe. He was referring to Georgia's attempt earlier this month to retake the Russian-backed separatist region of South Ossetia by force after a series of clashes. Russian forces subsequently launched a counter-attack and the conflict ended with the ejection of Georgian troops from both South Ossetia and Abkhazia and an EU-brokered ceasefire.

Reacting to Mr Medvedev's comments, China reiterated its concern over Russia's decision to recognise the independence of two Georgian breakaway regions. "We hope the relevant countries properly resolve the issues through dialogue and consultation," said a foreign ministry spokesman. The SCO was established in 2001 on the foundations of an earlier grouping, in part, to act as a counterweight to Nato influence in the region.

The BBC's diplomatic correspondent, Jonathan Marcus, says it is tempting to see Russia turning eastwards as its relations with the West sour. But, he says, it would be wrong to see this as the emergence of a coherent anti-Western bloc, as its most powerful member - China - could hardly be more integrated into the international economy. China also sees territorial integrity and the defence of national sovereignty as almost sacrosanct values in its diplomacy abroad, our correspondent says.

Earlier, seven of the world's leading industrialised nations - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the US and UK - said Moscow's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia violated Georgia's integrity and sovereignty. The group also said it deplored Russia's "excessive use of military force in Georgia and its continued occupation of parts of Georgia".

The UK's Foreign Secretary David Miliband said Western countries should re-examine their relations with Russia and warned Russia not to start a new Cold War. Speaking during a visit to Ukraine, Mr Miliband said Moscow had not reconciled itself with the new map of the region and that the West should look at ways to reduce its dependence on Russian oil and gas.

Russia said it was the last country that wanted a new Cold War. President Medvedev has said he was obliged to recognise the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia following the "genocide" started by Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili in South Ossetia in August. He also blamed Georgia for failing to negotiate a peaceful settlement.

TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Blast kills Awakening group leader](#)

Al-Jazeera – 18 August

A suicide bomber dressed in a woman's robe has detonated explosives in a heavily guarded Sunni area of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, killing the deputy leader of US-backed security volunteers, Iraqi officials said. Six bodyguards of Farooq al-Obeidi, deputy leader of the Awakening Council in Baghdad's Azamiyah district, also died in the blast, police

and Iraqi army officials said on Sunday. The Awakening Council has turned against al-Qaeda, hunted by Iraqi troops and the US military since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The soldiers have been conducting a months-long operation in Mosul, Iraq's largest city in the north, to try to clear it of Sunni extremists and al-Qaeda operatives. Sunday's attack occurred at 0430 GMT as the body guards were seated on chairs near a checkpoint near the Abu Hanifa mosque in the former insurgent stronghold. The assailant, wearing a black abaya robe, walked up to al-Obeidi's party and detonated the explosives, the officials said on condition of anonymity because they were not supposed to talk to the media.

Some of the officials said the attacker was a woman. But one of them said the attacker was a man who probably wore the flowing garment to conceal the explosives. Officials at a nearby hospital said about 20 people were wounded. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to release information to the media. Such attacks have become rare in the centre of Azamiyah since the US military built a concrete wall around the heart of the north Baghdad neighborhood, where Saddam Hussein, former Iraqi leader, took refuge when the city fell to US forces in April 2003.

Although Azamiyah was once a centre of resistance to the US and its Shia allies, many local Sunnis later abandoned the insurgency and joined the Awakening Council, which provides security there alongside Iraqi soldiers and police. "While I was shopping just across the street, I heard a huge explosion," said Omar Qassim, a member of al-Obeidi's group. "Body parts were flying through the air. I immediately realised that Farooq's party was targeted and he was probably dead."

The attack occurred about in an area where families often stroll on outings during hot summer nights. Abu Mohammed, 54, who was shopping at a nearby grocery when the blast occurred, said: "I rushed to the scene of the explosion to see terrified people running everywhere, and women calling for their missing children." The situation was chaotic and horrible. I saw dead bodies, wounded people and blood stains on the ground. Later ambulances arrived and picked both the wounded and the dead. Some shops nearby were damaged." Al-Qaeda in Iraq has often targeted leaders of the Awakening Council.

But Khalil Ibrahim, an aide to al-Obeidi, said the attack could have been carried out by rivals within the council itself. "We had received information that we would be targeted by groups within Azamiyah and within the Awakening movement itself," he said, refusing to elaborate. A senior police officer, speaking on condition of anonymity because the investigation had only just begun, said it was unlikely that explosives could have been smuggled into the area because of security checks around the wall. He said he suspected the attack could have been part of a power struggle within the council. Also on Sunday, insurgents raided a police checkpoint in the northern city of Mosul, killing one policeman and wounding another, the provincial police command reported.

Bombing kills dozens in Algeria

BBC – 19 August

A bomb at a police college east of the Algerian capital, Algiers, has killed 43 people and injured a further 38, the interior ministry says. The bombing targeted a paramilitary police training school at Issers, near Boumerdes, about 50km (31 miles) east of Algiers. An attacker drove a car full of explosives into the school's entrance, witnesses told the AFP news agency. Algeria has suffered regular attacks blamed on militants linked to al-Qaeda. Tuesday's attack hit exam candidates who were waiting outside the police school, witnesses said.

The interior ministry said 42 of those killed were civilians and one was a gendarme, or paramilitary police officer. It said 13 of the injured were gendarmes and the rest civilians. The bomb destroyed the entrance to the school as well as several nearby buildings. It also hit cars and other vehicles on nearby roads, wounding several passengers. "It's utter carnage," the elderly father of one of those killed in the attack told AFP. "May God punish them for the crime they have committed against these youngsters, and their country," he said, weeping.

Interior Minister Yazid Zerhouni, who went to the scene surrounded by heavy security, called the bombing "an act against Algerians". "These terrorist gangs are seeking through attacks against civilians to loosen the net closing around them as the security forces drive them to the wall," he was quoted as saying by the official APS news agency. The Algerian government has long said that Islamist insurgents are desperately seeking to raise their profile as they are isolated by security forces.

The French EU presidency and Spain condemned the bombing, while Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi expressed his support for Algeria's leadership. The attack came as Algerian newspapers reported that Islamist militants had ambushed eight policemen, three soldiers and a civilian near Skikda in eastern Algeria on Sunday.

Algeria has been struggling to emerge from a long civil conflict that started in 1992 when the army intervened to prevent a hardline Islamist party winning parliamentary elections. Violence has been much reduced compared with the levels of the 1990s, but there has been a surge in high profile attacks - including suicide bombings - since late 2006.

In September 2006 the last significant insurgent group to survive the conflict, the Salafist Group for Call and Conflict (GSPC), confirmed an alliance with al-Qaeda. Shortly afterwards it changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Algeria is a major exporter of oil and gas. In the most recent reported bomb attack, a suicide bomber at a beach resort killed eight people on 10 August. In December two consecutive bombings in Algiers - including one at the UN's offices - killed at least 37 people. Those attacks were claimed by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. No immediate claim of responsibility for Tuesday's bombing was reported.

Taliban claim credit for Pakistan blast

CNN – 20 August

The Islamic militant movement, the Taliban, claimed responsibility for an explosion at a hospital in northwestern Pakistan and warned of more attacks unless the military halts its offensive against insurgents in the region, state media reported. A suicide bomber detonated explosives near the emergency entrance to a hospital in the Dera Ismail Khan district on Tuesday, killing 29 and wounding another 35, the Associated Press of Pakistan said. At the time, a crowd had gathered outside the hospital to protest the death of a Shi'ite Muslim leader, who had been fatally shot, police said.

A Taliban spokesman later called authorities to warn of further attacks. After the blast, Pakistani newspapers and bloggers urged the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) to reconcile their differences and tackle the country's more pressing concerns: the economy and terrorism.

The district where the explosion occurred is located in the North West Frontier Province, near the country's border with Afghanistan. The province is rife with Islamic extremists and has been the site of recent clashes between Pakistani security forces. In late June, the military launched an offensive in the area -- the biggest push against extremists in the tribal region since the civilian government took power in March. Islamic militants vowed to retaliate against the operation.

The incident was the first in Pakistan since President Pervez Musharraf stepped down on Monday. The act of picking his successor has taken a back seat as the two political parties that lead the ruling coalition continue to wrangle over the issue of restoring judges that Musharraf fired. Last November, Musharraf declared a state of emergency and fired some 60 judges, including 14 of 18 who sat on the Supreme Court.

Critics contend that Musharraf sacked the judges because they were preparing to rule against the legitimacy of his third term in office. He had been re-elected president by a parliament stacked with his supporters, they said. After sweeping into power in parliamentary elections, the coalition promised to reinstate the judges within 30 days of taking office, but that hasn't happened. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif believed a simple resolution followed by an executive order will be enough to restore the judges. The PPP, on the other hand, wants constitutional changes along with a resolution. That would take longer.

One reason behind the delay, some experts have surmised, may be that the Supreme Court was expected to look into the controversial amnesty granted to former PPP leader Benazir Bhutto and her husband for corruption charges. Bhutto was assassinated during a campaign rally last year. Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari is in charge of the PPP while their son, the heir to the position, completes his college education in England.

Pakistan bombers hit arms factory

BBC – 21 August

At least 63 people have been killed and dozens injured in twin suicide bombings outside Pakistan's main munitions factory in the town of Wah, police say. The attack is the deadliest on a military site in Pakistan's history. Police say one man is in custody for the attack, which occurred some 30km (18 miles) north-west of Islamabad.

A spokesman for the Pakistani Taleban said they had carried out the attacks, which he said were a response to army violence in the country's north-west. Speaking to the BBC, Maulvi Umar of the Tehrik-e-Taleban Pakistan said the bombings in Wah were in retaliation for the deaths of "innocent women and children" in the tribal area of Bajaur. He said more attacks would take place in Pakistan's major urban conurbations unless the army withdrew from the tribal areas.

Pakistani Prime Minister Prime Minister Yousef Raza Gilani promised to punish the perpetrators. US President Bush later telephoned Mr Gilani to pledge his support in tackling what he called terrorist attacks. The leaders "reaffirmed their mutual support for going after these extremists that are a threat to Pakistan, the United States and the entire world," a White House spokesman said.

Wah is a strategically important town normally under heavy security as it is home to a large industrial complex producing conventional arms and ammunition, correspondents say. The first blast took place outside the gate of the factory as workers were leaving work during a shift change. Minutes later, another blast took place at a market nearby another gate of the same factory.

Local police chief Nasir Khan Durrani told the BBC: "Many others have been injured and we expect casualties to rise." Mr Durrani said none of the dead were military personnel. Mohid Ahmed, a student from Wah, was on a tour of the ordnance factories and witnessed the immediate aftermath of the blast from his bus. "There was smoke, bodies and blood," he told the BBC. "Those who were left alive were in great suffering. I saw a man clutching his leg and crying in pain and asking for help."

On Tuesday, 32 people were killed in a suicide attack on a hospital in the northern town of Dera Ismail Khan. The BBC's Syed Shoaib Hasan says it is the second recent direct attack on a Pakistani military installation. Last September, 17 officers and soldiers were killed in a suicide attack on a special forces base in the nearby town of Tarbela-Ghazi.

The ordnance factories at Wah lie on the road into Pakistan's troubled north-west, where fighting between security forces and Islamic militants has raged in recent weeks. Established in the early 1950s, it is a sprawling complex manufacturing everything from tanks and small arms to artillery shells.

Militants have often threatened to increase the level of violence unless the army pulls back from tribal areas close to the border with Afghanistan. Pakistani politicians are,

however, currently more preoccupied with political issues after the resignation of President Pervez Musharraf on Monday, the BBC's Charles Haviland in Islamabad says. Mr Musharraf, a key ally of President Bush's "war on terror" stepped down after nine years in power to avoid being impeached.

Bombs rock South

Bangkok Post – 21 August

reporter and a rescue unit officer were killed, and more than 30 others, including a police superintendent, were injured when two bombs went off at a restaurant in the southern province of Narathiwat late Thursday.

The explosion killed Chalee Boonsawat, a reporter for the Thai Rath daily newspaper. The second victim, identified as Chakrit Chalad-ungkrit died on Friday morning. The injured included Phadung Wannaluck, a reporter for Modern Nine television station, a police officer and a senior district officer. The policeman was believed to be Pol Col Prapun Meemongkol, superintendent of the district police station.

According to local media, the first bomb went off at Si Som restaurant, which is located near Sungai Kolok police station, at around 10.40pm. It damaged motorcycles parking near by. Police and reporters rushed to the scene, which turned into a trap as a second bomb exploded soon after their arrival. The second bomb reportedly went off about 50 metres away from the first scene.

The Fourth Army has agreed to temporarily lift the night curfew in two districts of Yala during the Muslim fasting period of Ramadan to allow people to perform their religious activities. Fourth Army commander Lt-Gen Viroj Buachamroon, who is chief of the Region 4 Internal Security Operations Command, had confirmed that the 9pm to 4am curfew, imposed in Yaha and Bannang Sata districts since April last year, would be lifted from Sept 1-30, army spokesman Col Akara Thiprote said. The Fourth Army would consider permanently lifting the curfew if the situation in the two districts improves. The districts were in the past a centre of insurgent activity.

Raids in Mumbai over Ahmedabad blasts

Daily News & Analysis – 25 August

Security agencies alongwith Mumbai police have been carrying out raids at various places in the metropolis following intelligence input that Abdul Subhan Qureshi, alleged to be the key person in Ahmedabad serial blasts, was hiding in the country's commercial capital.

During investigations into the July 26 serial blasts that left over 50 people dead, security agencies and police claimed to have found certain leads suggesting that Qureshi had left Ahmedabad for Mumbai, barely two days before the audacious attack, official sources said here.

He is alleged to be the person who had sent emails from the unsecured internet connection of Ken Haywood to various television channels and newspaper dailies minutes before the blasts, they said. Security agencies claimed that Qureshi is believed to have organised training camps for banned SIMI members between 2006 and 2008.

The fresh email, that was circulated to various TV channels and newspapers, transmitted from Khalsa College in Mumbai also gave credence to the intelligence input that Qureshi was in the metropolis. The email received last week, under the banner of Indian Mujahideen, had photographs of atleast two of the stolen cars to establish it as genuine. The alleged architect of Ahmedabad bombings used to work in a reputed computer firm before joining banned SIMI. His associates in the organisation include Rahil Abdul Rehman Sheikh, alleged mastermind in the Mumbai's serial train blasts in 2006 and Ehtesham Siddiqi, the former SIMI Maharashtra general secretary who is now being tried for his alleged role in the attacks.

DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

[Defense minister: PLA to strengthen cooperation with Bulgarian military](#)

Xinhua – 18 August

Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie pledged on Monday the Chinese armed forces would strengthen cooperation with the Bulgarian military to raise ties.

Liang, also a state councilor, made the remarks in a meeting with his Bulgarian counterpart Nikolay Tsonev. He called on the Chinese and Bulgarian armed forces to make joint efforts in contributions to safeguarding world peace and stability.

He added the China-Bulgaria military-to-military friendly ties have been continuously deepened in recent years, with frequent high level visits and extensive cooperation in various areas. He said the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) would continue to promote such cooperation. Liang hailed the good relation between the two countries, citing traditional friendship, enhanced mutual political trust and fruitful cooperation in economy, trade and other fields.

Tsonev said Bulgaria had always attached great importance to keeping a good relationship with China, and he was glad to see the relation between the two armed forces making remarkable achievements. He hoped the two sides would continue to strengthen friendly exchanges in various fields, such as training.

He reiterated Bulgaria's adherence to the one-China policy, saying the Bulgarian government considered Taiwan and Tibet as inalienable parts of the Chinese territory. Tsonev and his delegation members were here to watch the Beijing Olympic Games.

Pakistani security policy set to follow Musharraf

Reuters – 19 August

The United States has lost a strong ally with the resignation of President Pervez Musharraf but Pakistan's civilian government is unlikely to make any major change to his security policy, analysts said on Tuesday. The former army chief, who had earned the nickname "Busharraf" for his ties with the U.S. president, stepped down on Monday after becoming increasingly unpopular, partly because of his close alliance with the United States. Musharraf single-handedly steered Pakistan's security policy after he signed up to the U.S.-led war on terrorism following the Sept. 11 attacks. He survived at least two al Qaeda-inspired assassination attempts.

But Musharraf was never able to shake off nagging suspicion Pakistan was not doing all it could to tackle militants, in particular to stop Taliban raids into Afghanistan from remote havens in semi-autonomous ethnic Pashtun areas on the border. Questions have now been raised about the new government and, if it is weak and beset by political feuding, whether it will be able at least to maintain Musharraf's policy, even though the United States often called upon him to do more.

"With the resignation of President Pervez Musharraf ... the future of the U.S.-Pakistan partnership against terrorism may now be in doubt," U.S. Congressman Duncan Hunter, senior Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, said in a statement. "The new Pakistani government may or may not prove to be as reliable an ally ... as President Musharraf has been," he said.

But analysts said while the new government might introduce some cosmetic changes in its policy to win public support for a war many Pakistanis oppose, it was unlikely to bring about any drastic shifts. "I don't think there would be any significant change in the policy because if the past 5 months are anything to go by, I haven't seen any change," said Rustam Shah Mohmand, a former Pakistani ambassador to Afghanistan. "It's the same old policy pursued by Musharraf."

The United States will keep up the pressure no matter who wins the U.S. election in November. Both U.S. presidential candidates, John McCain and Barack Obama, stressed on Monday the need for Pakistan to focus on security now that the question of Musharraf's presidency had been dealt with. A former security chief in the Pashtun tribal areas, Mehmood Shah, said the militants were not giving up their violent campaign, leaving the government no choice but to press on with Musharraf's policies. "I think the government doesn't have any alternative," Shah said.

After taking power in March, the government tried to use negotiations instead of force to end violence across the country which over the past year has killed hundreds of people, including former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. The negotiations brought a lull in violence but also raised concern among allies and in Afghanistan that the talks would only give militants breathing space to regroup and o But the peace efforts have all but collapsed and fighting has again flared in several areas.

Nearly 500 people, most of them militants, have been killed in fighting in the Bajaur region on the border over the past few weeks, the government said. In what the Taliban claimed was a revenge attack for the Bajaur fighting, 13 air force personnel were killed in a bomb attack on their bus in the city of Peshawar last week. Analysts said while authorities would try to engage militants in talks, they would keep on alternating negotiations with military action as was done under under Musharraf.

Speaking to the National Assembly last week, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani said his government was ready to negotiate with militants who laid down arms, and military action would be taken as a last option. In a comment aimed at the many Pakistanis who see the campaign against militants as a U.S. war, he stressed the importance of the fight: "The war against terrorism and extremism is our own war."

In June, the government gave full authority to General Ashfaq Kayani, who replaced Musharraf as army chief in November, to decide on military action, and directed all security forces to work under him. While the military will play the dominant role in the campaign, it is the government that will bear the brunt of public anger if the killing continues.

But unlike Musharraf, who as army chief and president could weather a certain amount of public anger, the civilian government will have to face sceptical voters. "It's politically very difficult for the government to market this policy but it has to do it. It has to convince the people that these militants are destroying the country," said Talat Masood, a retired general turned political analyst.

[China unlikely to go to war over Taiwan, says defence expert](#)

The Australian – 19 August

Jonathan Pollack, professor of Asian and Pacific studies at the US Naval War College, told *The Australian* that China would become a much more potent military force in the long run. "They see this as an inevitable and logical outgrowth of their economic emergence," Professor Pollack said. "For all the shiny new systems they are acquiring, China has not gone to war for 30 years. I don't see them as a kind of budding overlord of East Asia. I don't think that is the way they conceptualise these things."

China has reported average real increases in military spending of 9.6 per cent in the 15 years to 2005; outside estimates are much higher. The US Defence Department has been among those expressing concern about a military build-up that could put regional balances at risk.

Professor Pollack, who has been visiting China for 30 years, said he could not preclude China becoming a military threat, but added: "I just don't see it as terribly likely." Professor Pollack is in Australia as a guest of the Centre for International Security Studies and the US Studies Centre, both at Sydney University.

He recently visited Taiwan, whose Government, elected this year, comprised realists who knew they had to try to find a means of dealing with China. "They have to find a way to give China clear incentives to collaborate with them, hopefully in a transition to some longer-term accommodation, the terms of which they don't know yet," Professor Pollack said. "As long as you have a Government in Taipei that is going to work hard to not provoke the Chinese, I would see the probability (of China using military force against Taiwan) diminishing, not increasing, even as China becomes much more capable militarily."

He said the US was undergoing a reassessment of long-term strategy following the Cold War, which had been deferred by the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. "A legitimate issue is whether American foreign policy is over-militaristic," he said. "We look at the problems we face in the world and there has been a tendency to think way too quickly about finding a military solution for things for which there may not be a military solution." This was true of Iraq and probably Afghanistan, he said. "(US Defence Secretary) Robert Gates has pointed out that if you look at the number of uniformed personnel on a single Nimitz aircraft carrier - about 6000 - that is more than the foreign service officers in the entire State Department."

[Cross-strait talks to resume after Beijing Olympics: SEF official](#)

Central News Agency – 19 August

A new round of cross-Taiwan Strait negotiations might resume after the Beijing Olympics and conclude in late October or early November, with Taiwan and China inking two agreements on setting up direct shipping links and cargo charter flight services, a Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) official said Tuesday.

Kao Koong-lien, vice chairman and secretary-general of the semi-official SEF, said the foundation has informed its Chinese counterpart -- the Beijing-based Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) -- of its idea of re-opening planned two-way talks in Taiwan after the Olympics. "The two intermediary bodies are expected to re-open bilateral negotiations after the Beijing Olympics and to wrap up the talks by late October or early November," he said. Kao made the remarks to reporters on the sidelines of a forum on Taiwan's prospects of becoming an "Asia-Pacific financial hub."

Commenting on the possible negotiation topics in the coming round of bilateral talks, he said the two sides agreed in June talks in Beijing to discuss adding new destinations and new routes to the existing direct cross-Taiwan Strait weekend charter flights, as well as the signing of two new accords on the establishment of direct shipping and cargo charter flight services across the strait.

The SEF and ARATS clinched two historic deals in June agreeing to open direct cross-strait passenger charter flights on weekends and to admit a larger number of Chinese tourists to visit Taiwan from early July. As to the question of whether ARATS President Chen Yunlin will visit Taiwan and make a round-the-island tour after the Olympics, Kao said only that "the SEF will definitely perform its duties as a host."

[Russia shuns Baltic drills, refuses to receive U.S. ship](#)

RIA Novosti – 19 August

Russia said on Tuesday it will not participate in the NATO-led Open Spirit 2008 naval exercise in the Baltic Sea, and will refuse to receive a U.S. warship in the Far East port of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky.

"In accordance with a decision taken by the Russian defense minister, the Navy command has sent a notification via diplomatic channels to Lithuania that Baltic Fleet mine sweepers will not take part in the Open Spirit 2008 international naval exercises in the Baltic Sea," Capt. 1st Rank Igor Dygalo said.

The exercise has been held annually since 1997 within the framework of NATO's Partnership for Peace program, with the aim of sweeping Baltic States' coastal areas for old WWI and WWII explosives. Russia's Baltic Fleet ships have been participating in the Open Spirit international exercise since 2003.

Dygalo said diplomats will also notify the U.S. of the "impossibility" of receiving a U.S. Navy frigate, which is due to pay a business visit to the Kamchatka Peninsula on September 5-9. Last week the U.S. and Britain officially pulled out of a Russia-NATO naval exercise, FRUKUS 2008, slated for August 15-23 in the Sea of Japan.

A Pentagon official on Thursday said the United States would stay away from the drill because of the South Ossetia-Georgia conflict. Washington and London have condemned Russia's response to a Georgian offensive on Tskhinvali, the capital of breakaway South Ossetia. Russia sent troops and armored vehicles into the region last week to expel Georgian troops following the attack.

Previously named RUKUS, the exercises were launched in 1988 as a vehicle for dialogue between the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The exercise name was changed to FRUKUS in 2003, when France formally joined the group.

[Russia says U.S. missile shield in Europe prompts arms race](#)

RIA Novosti – 20 August

U.S. agreements on deploying elements of its missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic provoke an arms race and do not provide for European security, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Wednesday.

"It is worth stressing that the deployment of the third site in Europe with genuine anti-Russian potential by no means enhances security on the continent," a statement from the ministry said. "Such measures provoke mistrust and prompt an arms race on the continent and beyond its borders."

The deal to place 10 interceptor missiles in Poland was reached last Thursday and formally signed Wednesday by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski. It followed the signing of an agreement on July 8 by the Rice and Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg to station a U.S. radar in the Czech Republic.

Moscow has consistently expressed its opposition to the U.S. missile shield in Europe, saying it threatens its national security. The United States says the shield is designed to thwart missile attacks by what it calls "rogue states," including Iran. However, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said again last week that Moscow has no doubt the missile shield's third site is aimed against Russia. The United States has sited interceptor missiles in California and Alaska to protect against possible attacks from the Pacific, particularly North Korea.

[Moscow, Minsk to build air def in response to US missiles in EU](#)

ITAR-TASS – 20 August

Creation of a common air defense system of Russia and Belarus may prove the retaliatory measure the deployment of US missile defense components in Poland and the Czech Republic may entail. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his Belarussian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko on Tuesday agreed that a treaty to this effect should be signed as early as this autumn.

Analysts see a number of reasons for the change in Minsk's position, including this one. The latest events have shown that Moscow is determined to play the key role in the post-Soviet space, and in doing so it will care little about the opinion of the "international community", so-called.

Lukashenko on Tuesday at last expressed his attitude to the operation in South Ossetia. In the most flattering fashion he approved of Russia's intervention. "Everything was done excellently, very calmly, wisely and neatly. In a situation like this the West would act in a way that would cause the whole world to shudder," he said.

"This belated approval of Russia's actions by the Belarussian president looked so clumsy and out of place, that Dmitry Medvedev could not but at least feel regret all this happened in front of the cameras," says the daily *Vremya Novostei*.

[Panama creates controversial intelligence force](#)

Miami Herald – 21 August

Panama, which has no army, is creating a new intelligence agency and a border police force, prompting concerns of a return to its militarized past. President Martin Torrijos says the intelligence force is needed to combat growing drug crimes.

He signed an executive order Wednesday creating the intelligence force and border police and combining the naval and air police forces. Lawmakers are expected to approve the initiatives.

But opposition lawmakers and civil rights advocates say the laws would give the government unprecedented surveillance powers. Warrants are still required to set up wiretaps, but critics say the rules are too loosely defined.

[Malacca patrols start Oct 1](#)

Bangkok Post – 22 August

The Royal Thai Navy will equip its Third Naval Fleet with vessels, aircraft, radars and ammunition for the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol, a joint patrol mission with Singapore and Malaysia in the Malacca Straits. The mission will begin on Oct 1 on the Andaman Sea and over the Straits of Malacca, said navy commander-in-chief Adm Sathiraphan Keyanont.

The sea patrols with air surveillance are intended to guard against attacks and intrusions. "The operation is to boost security and assure the public against attacks and intrusions. At the same time, the navy will work to upgrade the living quality of residents," he said. More personnel would be sent to the coastguard and air defence units.

The navy's reinforcement includes installation of shoreline radars to ease the workload of the patrol fleet. Part of the funding comes from overseas assistance, said the admiral. The next project, pending budget approval, is to build a shipyard in Phangnga. Adm Sathiraphan said Phuket and the Andaman Sea are peaceful.

The only problem is frequent arrests of illegal immigrants, mostly Rohingya Muslims from Burma. They would be detained and sent back home. He denied reports that the Rohingya minority would be relocated to a deserted island to stop their influx into the country, an idea suggested by Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej in March.

[Ukraine urges swift Nato membership](#)

Al-Jazeera – 24 August

Viktor Yushchenko, the Ukrainian president, has called for his country's bid to join Nato to be speeded up, following the conflict between Russia and Georgia. The call was made on Sunday in a speech marking the 17th anniversary of Ukraine's independence from the former Soviet Union.

"We must intensify our work to win membership in the European security system and strengthen the defence capabilities of our country," said Yushchenko. "Anyone who cares about Ukraine must openly declare that entry into the Euro-Atlantic security system is the only way to protect the lives and ensure the well-being of our families, children and grandchildren."

Nato leaders decided at a summit in April against rapidly granting membership to Ukraine and Georgia, but the alliance said it would consider the prospect of taking in the ex-Soviet republic in the future. Moscow has opposed the Western military alliance's expansion eastward, arguing that it is aimed at containing Russia.

Ukraine, which has a large ethnic Russian minority, has sided with Georgia in its confrontation with Russia over the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Kiev watched with concern as Russia sent tanks and troops deep into Georgian territory in response to a Georgian offensive on August 7 to retake South Ossetia, whose separatist leadership is backed by Moscow.

Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, this month underscored the fact Nato's offer to Ukraine and Georgia to eventually join the alliance was still valid, despite the conflict in the Caucasus.

[U.S. should shelve nuclear deal: Russian official](#)

Reuters – 25 August

The White House should postpone a Congressional vote on a landmark U.S.-Russia civilian nuclear pact to prevent it being held hostage to a row over the conflict with Georgia, a Russian nuclear official told Reuters.

The pact between the world's two biggest nuclear powers is aimed at opening up the booming U.S. nuclear market and Russia's vast uranium fields to firms from both countries by removing Cold War-era restrictions. The deal was signed in May but needs approval from Congress. A Russian official told Reuters it would be better for the deal to be delayed until next year to prevent it being blocked.

"It is a shame that the U.S. administration could not push this agreement through Congress in the time there was," the official told Reuters on condition of anonymity. "If you take into account the recent political events, Congress is unlikely to pass it, so to avoid it being blocked it would be right and proper to recall it and let it be looked at by the new administration." "The question of peaceful use of nuclear energy should not depend on the current political situation," the source said.

The 123 agreement, so called because it falls under section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act, is required before countries can cooperate on nuclear materials. It is crucial to the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, or GNEP, which the United States and Russia have discussed for more than a year as a way to expand peaceful nuclear energy development and mitigate proliferation risks. If ratified by Congress, the pact could open the way for deals potentially worth billions of dollars.

Relations between Moscow and Washington are strained over Russia's military intervention in Georgia. The United States has demanded that Russia withdraw all its forces immediately from Georgia, and Moscow has complained that Washington is

turning a blind eye to Georgian aggression. U.S. officials and lawmakers have discussed the possibility of adopting measures to punish Russia for its actions in Georgia.

[China to deepen defence ties with Myanmar](#)

Business Standard – 25 August

China today expressed keen interest to deepen its military cooperation with Myanmar so as to "safeguard regional stability". Stating this, Chinese Defence Minister General Liang Guanglie said China and Myanmar, as close and friendly neighbours, have increased cooperation in political, economic, cultural and military affairs in recent years.

The Chinese defence ministry is ready to work with Myanmar to further expand bilateral cooperation, so as to help the two nations' military building and to safeguard regional peace and stability, Liang told Tin Aye, chief of Defence Industries of Myanmar.

The Chinese Defence Minister also praised Myanmar's adherence to the one-China policy regarding on the Taiwan issue. Liang also expressed his sympathy toward the Myanmar people in the cyclone-hit region, Xinhua news agency reported.

Tin Aye said Myanmar values its relations with China, hoping that the two nations would further enhance friendly cooperation. Myanmar would continue to support the one-China policy, he reiterated.

[Army officer to head nuclear command](#)

Times of India – 26 August

For the first time since it was set up in 2003 to "manage and administer" India's nuclear arsenal, the crucial tri-Service Strategic Forces Command (SFC) will be getting an Army officer as its chief. The government on Monday announced that Lt-General Balraj Singh Nagal, an infantry officer posted as director-general of operational logistics at Army HQ, will replace Vice-Admiral Vijay Shankar as the new SFC chief, with the latter taking over the reins of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.

It was after the 10-month troop mobilisation along the Indo-Pak border under Operation Parakram in 2002 that the government had announced the creation of the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) headed by the PM as well as SFC in January 2003. Since then, SFC has made considerable progress, considering that for quite some time it did not have weapon delivery systems, adequate manpower or even a headquarter.

Moreover, there was a rapid turnaround of its chiefs, with three IAF officers being followed by a naval one in quick succession. "SFC is on a firm footing now...it needs to consolidate further as it goes along. Hopefully, it will control a nuclear triad in the near future. It's good that an Army officer has been named as its chief...all three Services need to get the 'nuclear' experience," said former Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash.

But while a major gain has been a much higher degree of military confidence as far as

nuclear command and control structures and related tasks are concerned, SFC still has some way to go before it becomes a full-fledged operational command, ready to respond at short notice. SFC, incidentally, only has the nuclear-capable Prithvi (150 to 350-km range), Agni-I (700-km) and Agni-II (2,500-km) ballistic missiles under its operational control at present. IAF, which sees itself as the primary custodian of the country's nuclear assets and delivery systems, has so far not handed over dedicated fighters to the SFC.

"IAF says it does not have enough assets at present. Instead, it itself maintains some 'dual tasked' fighters, jury-rigged to deliver nuclear weapons. The SFC should ideally have at least half a squadron of dedicated bombers," said a source. Similarly, the Navy has only two "dual-tasked" warships -- INS Subhadra and INS Suvarna -- armed with the Dhanush (variant of Prithvi with a 330-km range) missiles.

[Canada to widen Arctic patrols, PM says](#)

Globe and Mail – 27 August

Canada is expanding by half a million square kilometres the amount of Arctic Ocean it will consider to be Canadian territory for the purpose of policing pollution violations, and will make it mandatory for all ships entering its polar waters to report their presence. The move is intended to demonstrate that Canada is serious about asserting its territorial claims to the Arctic, including the fabled Northwest Passage, which no other country recognizes as a Canadian waterway.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the measures during a stopover in the Arctic Ocean hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk Wednesday. He's staging a brief tour of the North to champion Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic on what may be the eve of a federal election call. "These measures will send a clear message to the world: Canada takes responsibility for environmental protection and enforcement in our Arctic waters," the Prime Minister said.

Mr. Harper said the race for mineral and petroleum wealth in the polar region, combined with melting Arctic ice, has led to a record number of ships in northern waters. "The proliferation of international shipping in the North raises the potential for shipwrecks, smuggling, illegal immigration and even threats to national security," he said. "But more specifically it raises the potential of environmental threats, like oil spills, poaching and contamination."

Canadian law currently encourages, but does not require, incoming ship traffic in the Arctic to register with national authorities. Under the existing Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, Canada also regulates shipping to within 100 nautical miles of its coastline. Ottawa plans to double this limit and patrol the waters for pollution violations. "This will give us jurisdiction over ... [additional area] roughly equivalent to the land mass of one of the Prairie provinces," Mr. Harper said.

It's hardly a maverick move in international law, because Canada's so-called exclusive economic zone under a United Nations Convention already gives it authority to exploit

and manage resources within 200 nautical miles of its coastline. But it's nevertheless a bolder assertion of Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic as an oil-rich and increasingly assertive Russia sends bombers and ships to cast its own bigger shadow there.

However, Canada lacks maritime hardware to enforce its claims. It currently has few resources – aside from one big 39-year-old icebreaker and four smaller ones – capable of chasing interlopers or polluters across the Arctic. The Tories have committed Canada to buy up to eight Arctic offshore patrol ships, but the contracts have not been granted yet and it will take until at least 2013 for the vessels to arrive. And given Canada's problem-plagued procurement system, it could take even longer. Just last week, the future of 12 new mid-shore Coast Guard patrol vessels was thrown into limbo when Ottawa scuttled plans to buy them from Canadian suppliers, saying bidders' proposals were too costly. It's starting that process over now, but may end up going offshore to find vessels.

Rob Huebert, associate director of the University of Calgary's Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, applauded Mr. Harper's announcement. "If you say you are in control, well then, act it." But he said the United States may challenge Canada's right to require notification if a ship is entering the Northwest Passage, a route it considers an international waterway. Dr. Huebert said the United States would likely lodge a quiet diplomatic protest as first step, but added that it's not clear how Washington would proceed after that. If a shipper flying the U.S. flag wanted to defy Canada's reporting requirement, this might bring the issue to the fore, he said. But Dr. Huebert noted that many foreign vessels have an incentive to register – tacitly accepting Canadian rules on pollution in the process – because this means Canadian authorities will share vital information with them, such as satellite imagery.

[PRC must accept Taiwan's peace offer, or else: Ma](#)

Taipei Times – 27 August

President Ma Ying-jeou said yesterday that Taipei would immediately engage in a "diplomatic war" with Beijing if his proposed "diplomatic truce" with China did not receive a positive response. Through a "diplomatic truce" with Beijing, Ma said, both sides would no longer have to engage in malicious competition over diplomatic allies and Taiwan could drop its reputation as a state that engages in "checkbook diplomacy."

"Some have criticized the proposal as wishful thinking, but it is not," he told the Chinese-language *Global Views* magazine in an interview on Thursday. The interview will be published in next month's issue, which hits the shelves on Monday. In the interview, Ma did not elaborate on what he would consider to be a "positive response" from Beijing, nor did he say what "diplomatic war" would imply.

Ma said foreign aid was necessary, but added that it should not be used to secure diplomatic ties and should be limited to helping emerging states and the international community. While the UN has recommended countries set aside 0.7 percent of their GDP for foreign aid, Ma said there was room for growth as Taiwan's foreign aid represented only 0.15 percent of its GDP. Hailing his just-concluded trip to Latin America and the

Caribbean as a success, Ma said he did not talk money with leaders of the country's six diplomatic allies and eight leaders of non-allied countries during the visit.

Ma also proposed to allow Chinese students to study in Taiwan, which in his view would increase competitiveness in schools, help cross-strait reconciliation and resolve the problem of insufficient student numbers. "Twenty years from now, we might have a Tsing Hua University graduate head China's Taiwan Affairs Office and the head of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council from Beijing's Tsinghua University. I don't see anything wrong with that," he said. "How do you expect both sides to engage in a war if they are leaders of our government?" Ma said.

Ma said he believed there was trust on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, as highlighted by the fact that against all expectations, weekend charter flight services began soon after he took office in May. He said, however, that it would take some time before dramatic changes in the cross-strait situation became apparent.

Regarding the low numbers of Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan, Ma said this did not worry him and that his understanding was that Beijing had been preoccupied with the Olympics and consequently had not had the time to focus on the matter. Nor would the economy improve overnight, he said, adding he was confident his administration would overcome the difficulties and that Taiwanese should "just follow me."

In Taipei yesterday, Vice President Vincent Siew said the "diplomatic truce" with Beijing would not only bring peace in the Taiwan Strait but would also help stabilize the global community and expedite investment in Taiwan. The purpose of the proposal was to rebuild the country's international reputation from a "troublemaker" into that of a responsible stakeholder, he said, adding that the Ma administration would maintain friendly relations with all countries, especially Japan and the US.

DEFENCE ACQUISITION AND TECHNOLOGY

[Iran satellite launch a failure: U.S. official](#)

Reuters – 19 August

Iran's attempt to launch a dummy satellite into orbit was a "dramatic failure" that fell far short of the country's assertions of success, a U.S. official said on Tuesday "The attempted launch failed," the official said. "The vehicle failed shortly after liftoff and in no way reached its intended position," the official said. "It could be characterized as a dramatic failure."

Iran, embroiled in a standoff with the West over its nuclear ambitions, said on Sunday it has put a dummy satellite into orbit on a home-grown rocket for the first time, using a technology that could also be used for launching weapons. Iran says it has no nuclear-weapons plans and that it seeks nuclear technology to generate electricity.

Iranian television showed the rocket on its launch pad, but did not show the actual lift-off. "The failed launch shows that the purported Iranian space program is in its nascent stages at best -- they have a long way to go," the U.S. official said.

[Report: India Orders \\$2B in Missiles From BrahMos](#)

Defense News – 19 August

The Indian army has placed a \$2 billion (1.36 billion euro) order for cruise missiles from the Russo-Indian company BrahMos, the Interfax news agency said Aug. 19. "The order by the Indian armed forces comes to 2 billion dollars," the firm's chief executive Sivanthanu Pillai was quoted as saying by the Russian Interfax news agency.

BrahMos Aerospace is a joint Russian-Indian venture established in 1998 to design, develop, produce and market a cruise missile. The BrahMos missile has a range of 280 kilometers (175 miles). Russia is India's main arms supplier.

[India eyes new-generation Russian tank](#)

RIA Novosti – 19 August

India could consider plans to produce a new-generation tank jointly with Russia, the managing director of the BrahMos Aerospace joint venture said on Tuesday. Sivathanu Pillai said that while the new tank had yet to be developed, it could be built in Russia. He offered no indication of when the project could be launched, however.

Russian experts earlier said Russia and India could launch production of a new tank in the near future. India currently assembles T-90S main battle tanks under a Russian license. The T-90S version is in service with the Indian Army, and the local production of T-90S Bhishma tanks started recently in India. In 2001, India bought 310 T-90S tanks from Russia.

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.

[Boeing Awarded Contract to Continue Developing Mobile Laser Weapon](#)

Defense-aerospace – 19 August

The Boeing Company has been awarded a U.S. Army contract valued at approximately \$36 million to continue developing a truck-mounted, high-energy laser weapon system that will destroy rockets, artillery shells and mortar rounds.

Under the High Energy Laser Technology Demonstrator (HEL TD) Phase II contract, awarded Aug. 15, Boeing will complete the design of, then build, test and evaluate, a rugged beam control system on a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck. Boeing also will develop the system-engineering requirements for the entire HEL TD laser weapon system. Boeing successfully completed the preliminary design of the beam control system earlier this summer.

"This contract award is an important win for Boeing because it supports a cornerstone of the Army's high-energy laser program," said Scott Fancher, vice president and general manager of Boeing Missile Defense Systems. "HEL TD will give warfighters a transformational capability to counter the difficult threats posed by rockets, artillery shells and mortar projectiles."

"Boeing spent the past year developing the preliminary design of the HEL TD beam control system, and we appreciate the confidence the Army has shown in our efforts by awarding us these contract options to continue working on the program," said Gary Fitzmire, vice president and program director of Boeing Directed Energy Systems.

The objective of the HEL TD program is to demonstrate that a mobile, solid-state laser weapon system can effectively counter rocket, artillery and mortar projectiles. The program will support the transition to a full-fledged Army acquisition program.

Boeing leads the way in developing high-energy laser systems for a variety of warfighter applications. These systems include the Airborne Laser, the Advanced Tactical Laser, the Tactical Relay Mirror System and Laser Avenger. A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a \$32.1 billion business with 71,000 employees worldwide.

[India Sweeps Up Australian Defence Technology](#)

Defense-aerospace – 19 August

The Australian Minesweeping System, developed by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO), has scored another export success with India being the latest to acquire the innovative system that protects ships from underwater mines.

The Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, said the sale to India was the largest single overseas order for this technology since it was first exported in 1992. "Defence has now received over \$3 million in royalties for the worldwide sale of the Australian Minesweeping System while a significant number of jobs have been created for Australian workers," Mr Snowdon said.

Thales Australia has a worldwide licence to market the system which is now in service with the navies of Australia, USA, Denmark, Poland, Japan, UAE, Indonesia and Thailand. The DSTO-designed system is the world's first operational sweep to emulate the magnetic signals of ships, causing sea mines to detonate prematurely and safely out of range of target vessels. The technology has been further improved in collaboration with Thales Australia. The Australian Minesweeping System was famously used during the 2003 Gulf War when it was used by the Royal Navy to clear smart mines from the port of Umm Qasr in order to deliver humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people.

Thales Australia CEO, Chris Jenkins, presented Mr Snowden with a cheque of \$514,358 in royalties for the sale to India. Mr Snowden said the continuous improvement of the minesweeping technology represents best practice interaction between DSTO and industry. "This is a genuine collaboration in which DSTO and industry have shared the risks and the rewards; it has enhanced Defence capability, produced revenue for industry and the Commonwealth and reinforced Australia's reputation for technology innovation."

[Navy to Seek Third Stealth Destroyer](#)

AP – August 19

The Navy has reversed course and decided to push for construction of a third stealth destroyer, Sen. Susan Collins said Monday.

It had said last month that it would scrap the Zumwalt destroyer program after the first two were built. The DDG-1000 warship has massive firepower but is costly. The Navy said then that it will build more of the current-generation DDG-51, or Arleigh Burke, destroyers.

Collins, a Maine Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said Navy Secretary Donald Winter informed her of the decision and of the Navy's plans to buy spare parts for DDG-51s that could be used to restart production of that class of ships. The ship will be built at Maine's Bath Iron Works, Collins said. "This is great news for Bath Iron Works," she said. "It means that the third [DDG-1000] ship is very likely to go forward, and yet there's also the potential of building more DDG-51s."

[Iran to add new submarine to fleet](#)

Press TV – August 20

Iran's Naval Submarine fleet will be equipped with a new domestically manufactured submarine, the senior Iranian navy commander says. Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said Wednesday that Iranian technicians have used indigenous technology to build the new submarine. He did not specify the class of the new submarine.

Iran's Navy currently operates Ghadir and Nahang (meaning whale in Persian) submarines. According to Rear Adm. Sayyari, the Ghadir submarine is equipped with the latest military and technological equipments. The Nahang submarine, Iran's second homemade submarine, is reportedly one of the country's largest defense projects.

The announcement of a new addition to the Iranian naval fleet comes amid reports suggesting that an armada of US and European naval vessels had been stationed in the Persian Gulf in an unprecedented build-up. Rear Adm. Sayyari warned last week that Iran's naval forces are fully monitoring recent movements in the Persian Gulf, warning that Iran is prepared to defend its sea littoral integrity 'with all its might'.

The recent introduction of House Resolution 362 - which 'demands' that the US president make strenuous efforts to prohibit "the export to Iran of all refined petroleum products"

as well as "imposing stringent inspection requirements on all persons, vehicles, ships, planes, trains, and cargo entering or departing Iran" has fueled the speculation that Washington is considering a naval blockade of Iran over its nuclear program. Supported by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the Resolution is considered by its critics as a means of provoking war with Iran. The US and Israel have long threatened to launch military strikes on nuclear facilities in Iran should the country continue uranium enrichment.

Despite the UN nuclear watchdog's confirmation that Iran enriches uranium to 3 percent, a rate consistent with the construction of a nuclear power plant, the two staunch allies accuse Iran, a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), of pursuing nuclear weaponry. Iran maintains that diplomacy is the only acceptable means for clarifying the civilian nature of its nuclear program. Tehran, however, has warned that if the country comes under attack, it would not hesitate in taking necessary measures to protect its sovereignty- including the closure of the strategic oil passage, the Strait of Hormuz.

The strategically vital strait, between Iran and Oman, is an essential conduit for energy supplies and connects the oil-rich region to free sea. As much as 40 percent of the world's sea-transited crude oil passes through the waterway. In preparation for any possible act of aggression against the country, Iran is equipping its navy with high-tech weapons system, capable of targeting any vessel within a range of 300 km (185 miles) from its shores.

[Indian Navy Ships May Be Built in S. Korea](#)

Defense News – 20 August

NEW DELHI - With Indian shipyards too busy to meet demand for new military vessels, the Indian Navy is negotiating with South Korea to build warships there.

To begin with, a frigate and an escort vessel for the Indian Navy could be built in South Korea, Indian Defence Ministry sources said.

Adm. Sureesh Mehta, chief of the Indian Navy, will discuss the matter with South Korean Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee and other officials during an Aug. 19-24 tour that takes him to Japan and South Korea, Navy sources said.

The Indian Navy plans to buy more warships to replace the large number of obsolescent ones due to be scrapped in the next five years. But India's shipbuilding capacity is saturated.

Mehta will visit South Korean submarines and the naval academy. In Japan, he will meet Japanese Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba and Vice Defense Minister Kohei Masud. Mehta will also visit the Yokohama shipyard and the front-line ships of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force.

New Chinese Missiles Target the Greater Asian Region

International Assessment and Strategy Center – 24 August

Imagery made available on Chinese web pages on July 13 and July 15 appears to confirm that China has developed new short range and medium to intermediate range ballistic missiles for use in the Asia Pacific region. First viewed in an unclear image in November 2006, the new medium to intermediate range missile may be a version of the DF-21 (NATO code: CSS-5) or it may be the long-awaited DF-25. The other missile appears to be a new version of the DF-15 (CSS-6) with a terminally guided warhead. The significance of these revelations is that China is upgrading its regionally-targeted missile forces, which will soon pose additional threats to, among others, India, Russia, Japan, South Korea and to U.S. forces in the East Asian region.

China has long employed medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles as part of its nuclear, and increasingly, its non-nuclear missile arsenal. These missiles target Russian, Indian, Japanese, South Korean and U.S. military forces in East Asia. Early MRBM and IRBMs include the 2,790km range DF-3 (CSS-2) and the 5,470km range DF-4 (CSS-3). Both are liquid fuel missiles deployed in hangers or caves and towed to launch sites. Both of these weapons date back to the 1960s, and although they have been continually improved, are considered obsolete and due for replacement. In its 2007 report on the PLA the Pentagon notes there are 14 to 18 DF-3s and 16 to 24 DF-4 missiles.

Starting in 1987 China started deploying the DF-21 (CSS-5), a new solid-fuel missile derived from the JL-1 submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM). In its latest report on the PLA the Pentagon notes that 34 to 38 transporter-erector-launchers (TELs) are ready to fire between 40 to 50 DF-21 missiles. The DF-21 is now reported to come in an initial variant with a range of 1,770+km to 2,150km, and the DF-21A (CSS-5 Mod 2), with a range of 2,500km. The DF-21 can be armed with nuclear or non-nuclear warheads. Asian military sources have told the author that a version of the DF-21 is expected to be the first PLA missile to carry a new terminally-guided warhead to create the world's first anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM). Both U.S. and Asian sources have stated that this missile was tested in 2005 and in 2006. With the April 2006 launch of the Jianbing-5/YaoGan-1, China's first dedicated military synthetic aperture radar (SAR) satellite, and a related new high-resolution digital imaging satellite Jianbing-6/YaoGan-2 last May 25, China's new ASBM may be close to achieving an initial operational status.

Russian technology SAR and electro-optical satellites dedicated to counter-naval missions may be launched later this year. These satellites can join existing Chinese long-range Over-the-Horizon radar and land-based electronic intelligence sensors, aircraft and even ships to provide composite targeting data for ASBMs. China will also use its future "Compass" navigation satellite constellation to provide precision guidance for this and other missiles.

China's new ASBMs pose a strategic as well as a tactical challenge to U.S. forces in Asia. At present the U.S. does not have anti-missile capabilities to defend large U.S. ships against this threat, so vulnerable targets, most importantly aircraft carriers, will

have to remain out of missile range in order to survive. This factor will further limit the effectiveness of their already range-challenged F/A-18E/F fighter bombers. U.S. Aegis cruisers and destroyers now being outfitted with new SM-3 interceptors with upgraded radar and processing capabilities may in the future be configured to deal with this threat, but if so, they may not be available for other missions, like protecting people. The fact is that no anti-missile system is going to come close to providing reliable defense. For China, ASBMs provide a means for saturating U.S. ships with missiles. While ASBMs are bearing down from above, their attack can be coordinated with waves of submarine, air and ship-launched anti-ship cruise missiles.

The DF-21 also provided the basis for the four-stage KT-1 mobile solid fuel space launch vehicle, which in turn, forms the basis for the SC-19 direct-ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) missile. A more capable ASAT missile may be derived from the KT-2, which Chinese sources at the 2002 Zhuhai Airshow stated was based on the DF-31 ICBM. The massive debris from the January 11 satellite destruction has forced the U.S. to move one satellite and possibly, the International Space Station, to avoid destruction. The threat from the Chinese satellite debris will exist for about a decade to come.

The new medium to intermediate range missile pictured above began to appear on Chinese web pages in late November 2006. The first image was clear enough only to determine that a new missile with a new 10-wheel TEL could be seen on a testing range. Days later another image appeared of the TEL on a railroad flatbed car. The TEL is similar to that used by the DF-11A or CSS-7 Mod2 short range ballistic missile (SRBM). The latest picture to emerge on July 13, however, shows signs of being altered or "photo shopped." The missile tubes and TEL show significant differences; the TEL in the background may be fake. This is often sufficient cause to discount such a picture as Chinese military fans often have great fun generating such images, as does the Chinese government, to confound observers. Both often alter such pictures merely to conceal certain aspects of a system. However, the presence of other pictures of the missile tube and the TEL lend credibility to the main conclusion that there is a new medium to intermediate range missile.

One can only speculate about this missile, as no official data have been divulged by Chinese or Western sources. It is clearly in the same class as the DF-21 but is also larger, meaning it has a longer range, perhaps up to 3,000km or more depending on the payload. Chinese web posters have alleged this is the "DF-25," a program from the early 1990s first identified by authors John Lewis and Hua Di (who returned to China and was arrested), as a 1,700km range, 2000kg payload missile which uses the first two stages of the DF-31 ICBM. On July 15 Chinese web reports alleged this new missile has a range of 3,200km and can carry as many as three multiple nuclear warheads.[4] In 2002 the PLA tested a DF-21 with about five or six dummy warheads to assist penetration against missile defenses. So it is plausible that Chinese technology has improved since to include placing multiple warheads on medium to intermediate range missiles.

This missile's longer range also means it is capable of higher speeds, which would be useful in helping to counter current and projected U.S., Japanese, and perhaps Australian

and Indian missile defense systems. Its deployment will likely come before even these at best partially effective systems are in place. A larger payload also means this missile can carry multiple warheads or more decoys, also useful in defeating missile defenses. All of this will only add a greater burden on the U.S. and its allies to devise more effective missile defenses.

On July 15 a Chinese web poster placed an image of a new version of the DF-15 short range ballistic missile on the CJDBY web page (<http://bbs.cjdby.net/>). Seen below, this new version features a new warhead shape with a blunt tip and maneuvering fins. This shape is similar to that of the now defunct U.S. Pershing II intermediate range ballistic missile, destroyed in the late 1980s as part of the U.S.-Soviet Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. Back then the Pershing II featured a very modern radar-image correlation system (RADAG) to give its small nuclear warhead very high accuracy. The warhead seen on the DF-15 below may also be featured on the new anti-ship version of the DF-21 mentioned above.

This may indicate that China is deploying not one, but two new anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs). The smaller DF-15 ASBM is likely more easily deployed on ships and aircraft; such flexibility would be useful in securing Taiwan or other target (such as Japanese islands), following a PLA invasion, from potential U.S. and coalition forces which might conceivably intervene. The smaller DF-15 ASBM may also become an important capability that China's friends and clients may seek to also deter the United States. It is possible that Pakistan, Iran, even Venezuela might eventually seek to obtain this weapon, along with ground and air sensors, plus access to Chinese space systems for targeting.

In May 2006 the first images of another DF-15 variant appeared on the Chinese web. Subsequently indentified by Asian military sources as the DF-15C, its distinctive feature is an elongated warhead section. This is a new deep-penetration warhead intended to attack underground bunkers and bases. Taiwan and other countries rely on underground structures to shield their primary command facilities and in Taiwan also important air bases. It is likely that this new warhead may also be fitted to longer range missiles like the DF-21 or "DF-25."

This week, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army, China has opened a new display at the Beijing Military Museum for modern armor, air and missiles system. Partial to scant knowledge of these new weapons has existed for several years in most cases. The most important revelation at the display has been the first picture of China's new Type 093 nuclear powered attack submarine. But the picture is not accompanied by any additional supporting data, even though the 093 program likely dates back to the 1970s. Asian military sources recently disclosed that the third Type 093, apparently an improved version, was launched in 2006.

For the United States and its democratic allies the acquisition of a new major weapon system is usually a matter of public knowledge, if not intense debate, years before the system is put into service. Official data on the system is supplemented by contractor data

and press reporting. The weapon is usually designed to carry out publically known military doctrines, which conform to stated strategic and foreign policy objectives. From open sources and with modest effort, any foreign government, including China's, can with confidence determine the near to medium term U.S. strategic trajectory.

One cannot do likewise for China. It is not possible to truly know China's military doctrines and strategic objectives, just as it is not possible to know most current and certainly not future planned weapon systems. If you are not a government intelligence analysts with access to very expensive high resolution satellite imagery, which is not the case for the vast majority of non-Chinese and Chinese—and often even if you are- then you learn of a new Chinese military capability by chance: a revelation in a sales brochures; the unexpected statement by a Chinese military official; a surprising revelation by a foreign government official; or a random Internet posting by a Chinese military enthusiast.

Or worse, one learns by surprise. Increasingly, owing to the ability of the Chinese military to conceal, the revelation of a new capability comes as a shock and surprise. China's January 11, 2007 interception of a weather satellite with a direct ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon was an example of such a surprise. The apparent new medium to intermediate range missile constitutes another surprise. Other than two or three non-revealing photographs from the Chinese web, there has been no official Chinese comment on the new missiles depicted above. Are they nuclear armed or do they employ a new radio-frequency warheads for attacking electronic infrastructure? Or might they carry a new terminally-guided warhead to attack large ships, like aircraft carriers? How many does China intend to build and against whom are they to be deployed? At present one cannot know.

Such Chinese actions do not build assurance or confidence, but prompt suspicion and reaction. China's missile threat is likely to strengthen resolve in Tokyo and possibly Delhi to proceed with increased missile defense cooperation with Washington. Such defenses pose no threat of harm to Chinese or the Chinese government, other than to lessen the ability of the Beijing regime to coerce its neighbors with the threat of missile strikes. This loss of coercive power appears to frighten China's leaders the most, motivating its hard-to-overlook political campaign against U.S.-led missile defense cooperation in Asia. Past endeavors like the 640 Project prove China's past interest in missile defenses, while its recent ASAT demonstration demonstrate it can master the technology for new strategic missile defenses. Rather than let its neighbors rest behind new defensive missiles that cannot reach Chinese targets, however, China instead develops new missiles to overcome their new defenses.

China's new missiles are creating significant new burdens for U.S. forces dedicated to deterring Chinese military forces in Asia. Few in the US government expected that China's missile program would be as robust as it has turned out, or involve large numbers of missiles. The conventional wisdom was that China would pursue "minimal deterrence" and spend its money on desperately needed social reforms. But from one missile, the DF-21, China has devised new versions that can target U.S. aircraft carriers and the space

information system essential to their successful employment. Additional missiles are now being developed for both missions. Should the U.S. 7th Fleet's sole aircraft carrier based in Japan be neutralized by Chinese missiles, it may be weeks before another can arrive to face the same Chinese missile gauntlet.

What China's leaders appear unable to understand is that before too long, Japanese, Taiwanese and even Australians will determine that mere defensive measures, as well as reliance on insufficient American forces, are in turn no longer sufficient to deter China. They may conclude that they will also require their own independent deterrent, maybe even a nuclear one, as India (and North Korea) concluded long ago.

[Singapore Completes Frigate Fleet](#)

Defense News – 26 August

The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) has taken delivery of the last of six 3,200-ton Formidable-class frigates. French-based shipbuilder DCNS in tandem with ST Marine delivered without ceremony the RSS Supreme on Aug. 22. Commissioning is tentatively scheduled for 2009. Four of the six Formidable-class frigates are commissioned and operational in the 185 Squadron. As a multirole stealth vessel, the frigates have a complete weapon suite that includes one Sikorsky S-70B helicopter for anti-ship and anti-submarine missions. The ships have a range of 4,200 nautical miles.

"This also marks the conclusion of a comprehensive technology transfer to Singapore Technologies Marine (ST Marine) at the local shipyard providing turnkey shipbuilding," said Tan Jin Kien of EASTWEST Public Relations for DCNS. In 2000, Singapore's Defense and Science Technology Agency commissioned DCNS for six Formidable-class frigates as part of the New Frigate Program. The agreement included full technology transfer to ST Marine under ST Engineering. "The first frigate, RSS Formidable (68), was built at the DCNS shipyard in Lorient, France. The five following frigates were built in Singapore by ST Marine under DCNS supervision," Tan said.

A derivative of the La Fayette frigate, these are the first frigates in Singapore naval history. With a complement of 70 sailors, the ships will expand Singapore's ability to participate in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. "The RSN now has a genuine 'blue water' capability that will enable it to participate fully in joint naval operations with Singapore's friends and allies for purposes such as SLOC [sea lines of communication] protection and naval peacekeeping," said Sam Bateman, senior fellow at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore. "As we have seen with the recent RIMPAC exercise off Hawaii and an earlier Malabar exercise hosted by the Indian Navy in the Bay of Bengal, these vessels now allow the RSN to play in the big league of blue water navies," said Bateman.

On Aug. 25, the RSN and the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) concluded the joint SINGSIAM exercise that included one Formidable, the RSS Tenacious. "Exercise SINGSIAM, which is conducted once every two years, allows the RSN and the RTN to develop combined

operational concepts and naval tactics in areas such as maritime security," said a Singapore Ministry of Defense press release.

The Formidable-class frigate, RSS Steadfast, is making a port call at Shanghai from Aug. 25 to Aug. 29. "Singapore and China enjoy warm and friendly defence ties. The port call by RSS Steadfast is the first visit by a RSN frigate to China and is a reflection of the growing interactions between the two navies and defence establishments," said a Singapore Defence Ministry press release. The Steadfast sailed to China after participating in the RIMPAC exercise in Hawaii in July.

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

[Ensuring safe seas a global task / Japan should play its part in international efforts to combat piracy](#)

Yomiuri Shimbun – 19 August

Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Taro Aso and other party executives have broached the idea of having Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels escort Japanese tankers shipping oil from the Middle East to this country. The proposal by the LDP leaders was framed as an alternative to Japan's refueling activities in the Indian Ocean for the militaries of the United States and other countries engaged in antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan. Because of Japan's domestic political situation, it will be hard for the refueling mission conducted under the Antiterrorism Law to be extended beyond the law's expiration on Jan. 15.

Noteworthy in this connection is the fact that an increasing number of incidents of piracy have been taking place in various areas of the Indian Ocean. Given the urgent need to repulse attacks by pirates on vessels from various countries, Japan should make arrangements to ensure the safe passage of Japanese and foreign ships in the Indian Ocean. The government and the LDP have in the past considered assigning MSDF warships to protect Japanese tankers and other merchant ships from piracy. Following the start in November 2001 of Japan's refueling activities in the Indian Ocean for the multilateral forces engaged in antiterrorist activities, there was a terrorism-linked explosion aboard a French oil tanker off Yemen in October 2002. With the Iraq war seen imminent at that time, fears were growing that merchant ships in the Indian Ocean would be at greater risk of being attacked by terrorists. At that time, the government and the LDP studied whether it would be possible to additionally task MSDF vessels engaged in the refueling mission with "maritime security operations," provided for under Article 82 of the Self-Defense Forces Law.

Currently, the number of merchant ships under the management of Japanese shipping companies, including Japanese-flagged ones, that navigate in and around the Persian Gulf stands at about 20 a day, three to four of which are tankers, according to data from the Petroleum Association of Japan and the Japanese Shipowners Association. Because of the heavy traffic of vessels, it was considered technically impossible for MSDF destroyers and other warships to escort all individual merchant ships. It was decided, therefore, to

designate waters to be put under surveillance activities by the MSDF to which destroyers and carrier-borne helicopters would be deployed.

Article 82 of the law allows for MSDF operations "when there is a particular need in order to protect lives and property or maintain order at sea" and sets no geographical constraints on the operations. But in effect, MSDF members conducting maritime security operations would act within the bounds of policing activities as provided by the Police Duties Execution Law for police officers in this country. The SDF law also prohibits the MSDF from escorting vessels other than those Japan-registered ones. But the vast majority of ships coming and going in the Indian Ocean fly foreign flags.

Under the existing law, the MSDF is prohibited from aiding foreign-registered ships that have been attacked by terrorists. Were the MSDF to actually sit idly by in the event of such a situation, Japan would be roundly criticized by the international community. Since the MSDF's hands are tied under the current SDF law, the plan to dispatch MSDF warships to protect merchant ships was shelved. The need to escort tankers and other merchant ships to ensure their safety, however, is more urgent today than in the early years of the new century, as incidents of piracy have increased sharply.

In the waters off Somalia, a country at the eastern extremity of the African continent, there has been an alarming rise in cases of assault by pirates who steal goods in transit or demand ransom. So far this year alone, more than 20 vessels from such countries as France, Russia and Spain have fallen victim to pirates.

Pirate attacks targeted at ships managed by Japanese shipping firms have also been increasing, including the hijacking by Somali pirates last October of the Golden Nori, a Panama-flagged chemical tanker effectively under the ownership of a Japanese shipping company. In April this year, the Takayama, a large oil tanker of Nippon Yusen, a major Japanese shipping company, was hit by gunfire from a boat five times off the eastern coast of Yemen. In the Golden Nori hijacking incident, a U.S. destroyer taking part in antiterrorism operations attacked the pirates, sinking two of their boats. The captain and other crew members of the chemical tanker were released about 40 days later. In the incident that involved the Takayama, a German frigate on patrol, upon spotting the tanker navigating on a zigzag course, rushed to the scene, prompting the suspicious boat to flee.

To deal with the situation, the U.N. Security Council in June unanimously adopted a resolution to take "decisive measures" to combat Somali pirates. The task of guarding against Somali pirates is currently the responsibility of the multilateral forces' Combined Joint Task Force that is engaged in antiterrorism activities in the Indian Ocean. The MSDF has been refueling vessels of the CJTF, which comprises the naval forces of seven countries, including the United States, Britain, France and Pakistan. Germany, meanwhile, has already embarked on antipiracy surveillance operations using P-3C patrol aircraft that take off from a U.S. base in Djibouti, a country adjacent to Somalia.

Iraq Poised to Revive Oil Contract With China

New York Times – 19 August

Iraq is on the verge of reviving an 11-year-old contract with China worth \$1.2 billion, its largest oil deal since the invasion in 2003, an Oil Ministry official said Tuesday. The deal sets new terms for an agreement reached between China and Iraq under Saddam Hussein in 1997. Unlike that agreement, which included production-sharing rights, the new one is a service contract, under which China would be paid for its work at the Ahdab oil field southeast of Baghdad but would not be a partner in the profits.

Hussein al-Shahristani, Iraq's oil minister, is expected to complete the negotiations when he is in China late this week or early next week, said a ministry official who declined to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the news media. Mr. Shahristani was in Poland with other ministry officials to study its oil industry, the official said. In an interview that appeared Tuesday on al-Noor, an Iraqi news Web site, Mr. Shahristani said Iraq had decided that the original contract, with the China National Petroleum Corporation, was valid but open to negotiation. "The Chinese contract was signed with the former regime," he said. "It's valid. It was unfair because it was a production-sharing contract. We have negotiated with them for a year. It was turned from a sharing contract into a service contract."

Despite United Nations-imposed economic sanctions, Iraq had contracts with five foreign oil companies — from China, Russia, Indonesia, India and Vietnam — before the American-led invasion in 2003. Since then, Iraqi officials have been considering how those contracts should be honored.

"After long debate, we decided that those oil contracts should be reconsidered, not to be accepted just like that, because things have changed, the price of oil has changed, the regime is new," said Thamir al-Ghadban, a former oil minister who advises Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki. "We arrived at this consensus, that those oil contracts should be reviewed," he said.

Three companies had production-sharing contracts for oil fields in Iraq, though the Iraqi government maintains that Saddam Hussein had revoked a contract with the Russian oil giant Lukoil for one of the largest fields. "Concerning the Russian contract, the former regime had signed it for political reasons and canceled it for political reasons, too," Mr. Shahristani said in the interview on al-Noor.

"This oil field will be put up for transparent public competition." The other contracts are being discussed, Mr. Ghadban said, but the agreement with China was the most pressing. Iraq wants the oil from the Ahdab field — expected to produce around 90,000 barrels a day — to supply a planned power station in the province that is expected to be one of the largest in Iraq.

Under service contracts, companies provide technical support and consulting on how to raise oil production. Six other service contracts — with ExxonMobil, Shell, Total, BP,

Chevron and some smaller oil companies — were scheduled to be announced by the end of June, but have been stalled in negotiations. The duration of those contracts, which drew international criticism for being awarded without competitive bidding, has been shortened to one year from two, causing some of the interested companies to reconsider. The contracts were not especially lucrative, but were looked upon as a way to open a relationship with one of the world's largest oil-producing countries.

“Some of the companies have said one year is hardly worth the investment,” Charles Ries, the chief economic official in the American Embassy in Baghdad, told reporters on Sunday, citing a decision by the Anadarko Petroleum Corporation to abandon plans for a service contract. “It appears that in present form, they probably won't proceed on most of these or all,” Mr. Ries said of the Iraqi government, though he added, “Some of the companies are hoping to continue discussions.”

[Nation to get key oil reserve bases by year end](#)

China Daily – 19 August

China will complete the construction of its first four strategic oil reserves by the end of this year, a senior government official said Monday. “The progress has been smooth and all the four bases will be completed by the year end,” Zhang Guobao, administrator of the National Energy Administration (NEA), said after a press conference in Beijing. “Their total capacity will amount to 16.4 million cu m.” Zhang made the comments at his first public appearance since the NEA's inauguration on Aug 8.

The administration came into being as part of the reshuffle of government agencies in March. Zhang now also holds the position of vice-minister of the National Planning and Reform Commission (NDRC), the nation's top economic planner. China started to build its strategic oil reserves in 2004, in order to fend off the risk of oil shortages and reduce the impact of oil price fluctuations. The government plans to build strategic oil reserves in three phases over 15 years, involving an estimated investment of 100 billion yuan (\$14.6 billion).

The first four reserves, located in Dalian, Qingdao, Ningbo and Zhoushan, are expected to maintain strategic oil reserves equivalent to 30 days of imports in 2010. The reserve in Ningbo, a coastal city in Zhejiang province, was put into operation in late 2006. It is the largest of the first four reserves, with a total storage capacity of 5.2 million cu m. The central government is now reportedly selecting locations for the second batch of strategic oil reserves.

Cities including Tangshan and Guangzhou are understood to be vying for the projects, but Zhang declined to comment on this. The newly established energy administration oversees the nation's oil reserves and monitors the domestic and overseas energy markets. It is also responsible for mapping out China's energy development strategy and formulating rules and regulations for the energy sector.

Zhang also said yesterday that the installed capacity of wind power in the nation is expected to exceed 10 million kW by the end of this year, compared with 4.03 million kW in 2007. The drastic increase came as the government has been promoting the use of renewable energy in the face of rising oil prices.

In recent years, the government has rolled out a host of fiscal and tax incentives to boost the development of the alternative energy sector, including a 50-percent cut in value-added tax for wind power plants. Last year, renewable energy such as wind power, biomass and hydropower accounted for 8.5 percent of the nation's total energy use. That figure is set to increase to 10 percent in 2010 and 15 percent in 2020. The newly established energy administration will set up more renewable energy projects to further spur the development of the sector, according to Zhang.

[U.S. Navy Plans Patrols in Gulf of Aden as Somali Piracy Grows](#)

Bloomberg – 22 August

Western coalition warships and aircraft will conduct patrols to boost security in the Gulf of Aden, the U.S. Navy said, after pirates hijacked a German ship off Somalia's coast -- the sixth such seizure this month. "The idea is to counter and deter destabilizing activity in the area," Lieutenant Stephanie Murdock, spokeswoman for the U.S. Fifth Fleet, said in a telephone interview today from Bahrain. "It's part of the plan to help with regional security in the area. This is an area which we're keeping an eye on."

Somalia's 3,300-kilometer (2,060-mile) coastline is considered one of the world's most dangerous stretches of water because of piracy. The number of attacks on vessels more than tripled last year to 31 incidents, compared with 10 a year earlier, according to the International Maritime Bureau. The agency has advised all vessels to stay at least 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) from the Somali coast.

Pirates seized a German cargo carrier sailing under the Barbuda and Antigua flag in the Gulf of Aden yesterday, Noel Cheong, head of the IMB, said by phone from Kuala Lumpur today. The ship had nine crew members on board, he said. Their nationalities weren't known. "All of the attacks took place near the same area, but we don't know whether they are the same group or different groups of pirates," Choong said. The seizure of the vessel came hours after attacks on a Japanese tanker and an Iranian bulk carrier, he said. Yesterday, MISC Bhd, the world's biggest owner of liquefied natural gas tankers, said one of its ships loaded with palm oil was hijacked on Aug. 19. Last week a vessel owned by Thoresen Thai Agencies Pcl carrying plywood was seized, while Xinhua reported a Nigerian ship, the Yenagoa Ocean, was hijacked by Somali militants on Aug. 9.

The coalition patrols will be commanded by Canada, Murdock said. She couldn't give details on the number of ships involved or their exact locations for security reasons. The aim is to "allow merchant mariners to pass through the control area with no issues," she said. "There's piracy but there's also drug smuggling, people smuggling."

Somalia is at the entrance to the Gulf of Aden, which leads to the Red Sea and the 166-kilometer (103-mile) Suez Canal, one of the world's most important shipping channels. The country has been plagued by factional fighting between warlords and hasn't had a functioning central administration since the 1991 ouster of former dictator Mohammed Siad Barre.

[Coast Guard not afraid of Northern Fleet](#)

Barents Observer – 26 August

Despite the presence of Northern Fleet vessels, the Norwegian Coast Guard continues to detain Russian trawlers suspected in illegal fishing in the waters around Spitsbergen. Meanwhile, Russian fishermen call for their Navy's intervention. Only in the course of the last week, the Norwegian coast guard vessel “KV Svalbard” has detained two trawlers, one of them for the catch of under-size fish and the other for irregular catch registration.

The detentions have taken place amid the presence in the area of Russian Northern Fleet vessels. Russian Navy commander Vladimir Vysotskii in July this year announced that two Northern Fleet vessels, the “Severomorsk” and the “Marshal Ustinov” would be sent to Arctic waters, including the Spitsbergen zone, for the protection of national interests. The announcement came after demands from the federal Fishery Agency (Rosrybolovstvo).

None of the Navy vessels have however intervened in the Norwegian detention of Russian trawlers. According to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Deputy Navy Commander Igor Dygalo confirms that military action in a situation with trawlers can only be made after the approval of the Foreign Ministry. The Russian Foreign Ministry, however, has kept silent in the recent situations, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* writes.

Norway in 1977 established a 200 mile fishery protection zone around the far northern archipelago, and now claims sovereignty over the waters. Russia, meanwhile, is strongly against the Norwegian claim, and disputes Norway's right to control Russian trawlers operating in the area.

MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

[US aid ship avoids Russian troops](#)

BBC – 27 August

The US military has steered a vessel carrying aid to war-torn Georgia away from its expected destination of Poti, a Georgian port occupied by Russia. The ship instead docked in Batumi, another Black Sea port away from the self-imposed Russian zone of influence.

In a BBC interview, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev accused the US of taking weapons into Georgia under the guise of humanitarian aid. The Pentagon denied the charge. It gave no reason for docking in Batumi. Mr Medvedev said ships carrying

humanitarian aid were free to dock in Poti, and denied that Russia had a blockade on the port. "The Americans call them humanitarian loads but it's of course weapons," he said.

Meanwhile, UK Foreign Minister David Miliband is in Ukraine trying to put pressure on Moscow, a day after Russia's decision to recognise the independence of Georgia's breakaway provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The two regions have had autonomy since a civil war in the early 1990s, but no other nation has recognised their independence. A conflict broke out earlier this month when Georgia tried to reimpose its authority in South Ossetia, sparking retaliation from Moscow. The US and other Western governments have backed Tbilisi in their struggle with Moscow, and the US Coast Guard cutter Dallas is the second navy ship to arrive carrying aid since the conflict began.

The BBC's Gabriel Gatehouse, in Tbilisi, says that by choosing to dock in Batumi, the US appears to have shied away from a possible confrontation with Russian troops in Poti.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[Iran announces plans to build six more nuclear plants](#)

Khaleej Times – 19 August

Iran plans to build six more nuclear power plants, the deputy head of the Iranian Atomic Organization said Tuesday. Ahmad Fayazbakhsh told the official news agency IRNA that contracts were signed with six local companies commissioned to find suitable locations for the new plants within the next 13 months.

Companies from Canada, Russia and Switzerland also took part in the tender but only local firms were finally selected, he said. Iran wants to have six nuclear power plants within the next 13 years but has already started the uranium enrichment process for producing the fuel, raising Western fears that the Islamic republic is pursuing a nuclear weapons' programme.

Uranium enriched to a level up to 5 per cent is used for making nuclear fuel, but if enriched to a higher degree, it can be employed for producing nuclear bombs. The West alleges Iran's persistence to enrich uranium despite international threats of financial sanctions and political isolation is suspicious because it has operational nuclear power plants. Iran's only nuclear plant is still under construction at the southern Persian Gulf port of Bushehr. After an eight-year delay, the first unit of the plant, which is built in cooperation with Russia, is supposed to be ready later this year. Russia will provide nuclear fuel for the Bushehr plant.

[Nuclear Suppliers Group discusses India-US nuclear deal](#)

AFP – 21 August

The Nuclear Suppliers Group, which controls the export and sale of nuclear technology worldwide, debated Thursday whether to amend its rules and allow India to share US knowhow. Gathering at Japan's permanent mission to the IAEA, the highly-secretive 45-member NSG began a special two-day plenary to discuss a US proposal to grant India -- which refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) -- an exemption and allow it access to US nuclear materials and technology.

Under NSG rules, all nuclear trade with India is banned because it refuses to sign the NPT. The United States argues that the deal, signed by Washington and New Delhi in 2005, will bring India closer to the NPT fold after 34 years of nuclear isolation and help combat global warming by allowing the world's largest democracy to develop low-polluting nuclear energy.

Critics respond that the deal undermines non-proliferation efforts by providing US nuclear technology to a non-NPT state that developed atomic bombs in secret and conducted its first nuclear test in 1974. They accuse nuclear states in favour of the deal of ignoring the proliferation dangers in pursuit of commercial and political gains. Russia and France would meanwhile be free to begin nuclear trade with India if the NSG agrees to the US-India deal.

The US-India deal, known as the 123 Agreement, must clear three hurdles before it can come into effect. The first hurdle fell earlier this month when the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, approved an India-specific safeguards agreement. The NSG represents the next obstacle before the deal can finally be approved by the US Congress. No delegates to the NSG were willing to make any comment to reporters upon entering Thursday's meeting or after a special briefing conducted by India at IAEA headquarters. But unanimous approval is required and some NSG members are openly sceptical about the deal.

Phil Goff, New Zealand's minister for disarmament and arms control, told an Indian newspaper Wednesday that "like a number of countries, we do have reservations." Austria, Switzerland, Ireland and Norway are also believed to harbour similar concerns. The Arms Control Association of the United States and several other NGOs and experts called the proposal a "non-proliferation disaster" in an August 15 letter to the NSG's current chair, Germany.

Nevertheless, the United States is confident the deal will go ahead. "We are hoping to get as wide an approval as possible so that we can move on with regard to having this agreement for Congress to look at," said State Department spokesman Robert Wood recently. "We think this agreement is very good for the United States and India and for the international community, otherwise we would not be pursuing this."

Vienna-based diplomats said the NSG was not expected to make a final decision this week, and that another meeting in early September could be necessary to reach

consensus. A senior US congressman has meanwhile threatened to hold up the deal unless the Nuclear Suppliers Group adopts a provision terminating the deal if India conducted a nuclear test explosion. Howard Berman, chairman of the House of Representatives foreign affairs committee, said that without such a condition, the deal could not be approved before Bush leaves the White House in January 2009.

Two Democratic lawmakers, writing Wednesday in the New York Times, said the deal between New Delhi and Washington threatens to accelerate India's arms race with Pakistan, notably after Tuesday's resignation of Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf, an important US ally in South Asia. "This deal was foolish when Pakistan was relatively stable; with Mr. Musharraf gone, an arms race on the subcontinent would likely be more difficult to control," warned Edward Markey and Ellen Tauscher. Time may also not be on the Bush administration's side, as the US House and Senate will adjourn in late September ahead of the presidential and congressional elections less than two months later.

[N. Korea Threatens to Restore Plutonium Plant](#)

New York Times – 26 August

North Korea said Tuesday that it had stopped disabling its main nuclear complex and threatened to restore facilities there that the North had used to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons unless the United States removed it from a terrorist list. For months, United States experts and North Korean engineers have been disabling key facilities at the complex at Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang, the capital, in a move that temporarily shut down the North's only known source of plutonium.

If North Korea rebuilds the facilities in defiance of the United States and a coalition of major powers that have sought to disarm North Korea, it would nullify a major foreign policy achievement of the Bush administration. North Korea often issues strident warnings as a negotiating tactic but the latest declaration still dimmed the administration's hopes of achieving a breakthrough in the North's nuclear disarmament before President Bush leaves office in January.

The State Department described the announcement as a "step backward." "This certainly is in violation of their commitments to the six-party framework," a State Department spokesman, Robert Wood, told reporters, according to Reuters.

North Korea accused Washington of not keeping its promise to take North Korea off a terrorism blacklist. The United States wants North Korea to agree to a comprehensive method of checking whether it withheld information in a report on its past nuclear activities before it removes North Korea from the list.

A White House spokesman, Tony Fratto, said North Korea had informed Washington that it had halted its work at the plant temporarily. "We've informed North Korea that we will take action to rescind its designation when it fulfills its commitment regarding verification," he said.

The state-run news agency, KCNA, quoted a North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying: “We have decided to immediately suspend disabling our nuclear facilities. This measure has been effective on Aug. 14, and related parties have been notified of it.” Work started at Yongbyon late last year to disable a nuclear reactor, a factory that produces fuel for the reactor and a laboratory that can extract plutonium from spent fuel rods. North Korea demolished the reactor’s cooling tower in June.

It would take at least a year to restart the disabled facilities, experts said. Disabling the complex does not meet Washington’s ultimate goal of dismantling it. The United States wants full access by inspectors to all locations it suspects of being nuclear sites to ensure that there are no hidden nuclear assets.

The North bristled at this demand. “The U.S. is gravely mistaken if it thinks it can make a house search in our country as it pleases, just as it did in Iraq,” the North Korean spokesman said. He said North Korea was still technically at war with the United States because the 1950-53 Korean War had ended only in a cease-fire. He added that asking the North to give up its nuclear programs while it was not allowed similar inspections in South Korea, to make sure that there are no American nuclear weapons there, amounted to “a gangster’s demand.” North Korea has sought for years to be removed from a list of state sponsors of terrorism.