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CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

[U.S. frees 1,400 detainees in Iraq for Ramadan](#)

Reuters – 10 October 2007

The U.S. military has released about 1,400 Iraqi detainees so far to mark the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, after first making each take a pledge not to attack U.S. or Iraqi forces, a U.S. general said on Wednesday. The vast majority of the 25,000 detainees held by U.S. forces are Sunni Arabs accused of involvement in the insurgency against the Shi'ite-led government and American troops. Major-General Douglas Stone, the commander of U.S. detention facilities in Iraq, told reporters in Baghdad the programme of releasing about 50 detainees a day would likely continue after Ramadan ended this week. The holy month began in mid-September. "We will continue to release every detainee who is no longer an imperative security risk," he said. Each of the prisoners released had been interviewed by a U.S. military panel to assess the risk they posed to Iraqi society. Those deemed to pose no risk were then required to make a pledge of good behaviour in front of an Iraqi judge. "I want to thank the detainees ... who after going through this process have returned to Iraqi society and who themselves have chosen to build a better Iraq and have chosen to no longer engage in insurgent activity," Stone said.

[Iraq's displaced people nightmare](#)

BBC – 10 October 2007

The scale of the overall displacement is unprecedented in the modern history of the Middle East. There are now an estimated four million Iraqis who have been forced to flee their homes, and the numbers continue to rise, according to the UN refugee agency. Neighbouring Jordan and Syria, which have borne the brunt of the problem after receiving some two million refugees over the past few years, have now restricted access because they can no longer cope with the influx. The plight of those who have fled their homes but have not been able to leave the country is dire, says the UN refugee agency. The head of the Iraq Support Unit, Andrew Harper, told the BBC that an increasing number of provinces were turning the refugees away because they lacked resources to look after them. He said with so many people in desperate need of shelter and food, Iraq was like a pressure-cooker.

[Commander Says NATO Should Fight Afghan Drug Trade](#)

Voice of America – 10 October 2007

The top NATO commander says the alliance should do more to fight the drug trade in Afghanistan, where it has had primary responsibility for security issues for nearly a year. General Bantz Craddock called for NATO to do more to fight Afghanistan's drug industry, while acknowledging that the alliance continues to have trouble getting its members to provide forces and equipment for its security and training missions. "While this is not a primary role or responsibility for NATO and its forces, we must find ways to impact all of the pillars that support this narco-terrorism problem," he said. The general says NATO already helps the Afghan authorities fight drug traffickers by sharing

intelligence and providing logistical support and emergency rapid response forces when needed. But he says the focus must move from eradicating the poppy crop, which he says mainly hurts poor farmers, to attacking the trafficking networks, and NATO should play a larger role.

[Afghanistan refugees fight to stay in camps](#)

The Independent – 11 October 2007

Helmand, the focus of British military and development operations in Afghanistan, is facing a severe humanitarian crisis with the arrival of a stream of people seeking refuge from fighting elsewhere in the country. But despite the growing international presence in Lashkar Gar with the UK and other Western countries pledging millions of dollars in development programmes, these internally displaced have received little help. The hands of the international community are tied. The Helmand administration insists that the refugees are squatting illegally and must return to their home villages. Any aid, it is held, will make the settlements more permanent and encourage others to join the migration. The pressure to move the camps has increased after the refugees tapped into the already straining power lines and the water supply, and created shortages in Lashkar Gar, a place where a mini revival in happening thanks to a flurry of reconstruction and development. Meanwhile, the official neglect has created a pool of disaffected young men ready for recruitment by the Taliban. Nato troops report increasing prevalence of mines and explosive devices on the routes to the camps and local police stations come under nightly attack.

[U.S. Military Deaths in Iraq at 3,820](#)

The Associated Press – 11 October 2007

As of Wednesday, 10 October 2007, at least 3,820 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. The figure includes seven military civilians. At least 3,114 died as a result of hostile action, according to the military's numbers. The AP count is four higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated Wednesday at 10 a.m. EDT. The British military has reported 170 deaths; Italy, 33; Ukraine, 18; Poland, 21; Bulgaria, 13; Spain, 11; Denmark, seven; El Salvador, five; Slovakia, four; Latvia, three; Estonia, Netherlands, Thailand, Romania, two each; and Australia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, South Korea, one death each.

COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Chancellor boosts spending to combat terrorist threat](#)

Guardian Unlimited – 9 October 2007

A significant rise in the anti-terrorism budget and an extra £400m for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been announced in the government's pre-budget report. The chancellor, Alistair Darling, also announced that the £2.5bn intelligence budget - which

includes funding for MI5, MI6, police operations and other anti-terrorist activity - would rise to £3.5bn by 2010. The Home Office's share will be £700m. Mr Darling promised that money spent on maintaining the Trident nuclear deterrent would not come at the expense of soldiers serving abroad. The chancellor said the 1.5% increase in defence expenditure in his pre-budget report would be part of "the longest period of rising investment in the defence of our country for almost 30 years". Defence funding was already scheduled to rise to £37bn by 2010. He confirmed that the funding would allow the Ministry of Defence to go ahead with long-standing plans to build two new aircraft carriers and to provide better-protected army vehicles. A new £260m stabilisation aid fund, managed by the MoD, the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development, will pay for peacekeeping activities around the world.

[Taliban free German hostage in Afghanistan](#)

Reuters – 10 October 2007

Taliban rebels freed a German hostage in Afghanistan on Wednesday after more than two months of captivity, Germany's foreign minister said. "The German citizen ... who was kidnapped in Afghanistan is once again free. We are happy and relieved," Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said in a statement. The German engineer, Rudolf Blechschmidt, later arrived at the German embassy in the Afghan capital, Kabul, an embassy spokeswoman said. "He has arrived at the embassy and he is being medically examined right now," the spokeswoman said. "He seems physically well, but of course he has lost a lot of weight." Blechschmidt and five Afghans were seized along with another German in Wardak province, just southwest of Kabul, in July. The Taliban kidnappers shot dead the other German soon afterwards after he suffered a heart attack.

[Pakistan rebels display hostages](#)

BBC - 11 October 2007

Pro-Taliban militants in Pakistan say the government is showing little urgency in securing the release of some 280 captured soldiers. The militants captured them in the South Waziristan tribal region more than a month ago. The BBC has been given exclusive access to the militants and the soldiers. The rebels are demanding the military withdraw from the area. The US says the area is a haven for pro-Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. "We are very serious about the matter and want to resolve it peacefully," Zulfiqar Mehsud, a spokesman for militant leader Baitullah Mehsud told the BBC from the rebels' base near the border with Afghanistan. "As far as the government's response is concerned it is better to ask them about it, but I believe they have several reasons for not being serious." He said one was the political crisis in Islamabad over the presidential election. He also said the government would be trying harder if one of the kidnapped soldiers "was the son or relative of a general or minister".

DEFENCE STRATEGY

[U.S., Russia seem no closer on missile defense](#)

Reuters – 10 October 2007

The United States and Russia appear no closer to resolving their differences on contentious issues such as missile defense, Iran and Kosovo as two top U.S. officials head to Moscow this week for high-level talks. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates meet their Russian counterparts on Friday for talks expected to focus on how they might cooperate on a planned U.S. missile defense shield in Europe. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov will take part in the so-called "2+2" meeting. The discussions are also expected to cover how to persuade Iran to give up its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons, Russia's threat to suspend its participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty and what might succeed the START nuclear arms reduction treaty, which expires in 2009.

[Gates Says Military Faces More Unconventional Wars](#)

New York Times – 11 October 2007

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said Wednesday that the Army needed to improve its ability to train foreign militaries and to prepare for other unconventional conflicts that it was likely to face in coming decades. Speaking to a gathering of current and retired soldiers, Mr. Gates sketched out a vision for making the Army better at conducting wars like those in Iraq and Afghanistan, which he said would “remain the mainstay of the contemporary battlefield for some time.” His message was in many ways a blunt challenge to the Army not to treat the current conflicts as anomalies and to retreat into the more familiar task of preparing for conventional combat, as it did after the Vietnam War. Future conflicts, he said, “will be fundamentally political in nature and require the application of all elements of national power.” “Success will be less a matter of imposing one’s will and more a function of shaping behavior of friends, adversaries, and most importantly, the people in between,” he said.

[Rethinking French defense](#)

ISN Security Watch – 11 October 2007

Defense issues are expected to slip beneath the radar next week when France's Parliament begins debate on the 2008 budget bill, the first of the Sarkozy era. While President Nicolas Sarkozy has promised a radical overhaul of defense policy, the new president's first budget actually strikes a consensual tone on military spending, which will remain stable next year, at €36.7 billion (US\$52.2 billion). In another nod to continuity, the budget bill also makes good on nearly €16 billion in planned equipment purchases approved by former president Jacques Chirac, which will allow the French armed forces to acquire a range of new attack helicopters, fighter jets, submarines, naval frigates and armored fighting vehicles included in France's last five-year military spending planning law, which expires in 2008. Experts here say Sarkozy will only begin putting his own

imprint on defense spending at the end of the year, when Parliament is slated to begin discussing a new five-year military spending planning law for the 2008-13 period.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[\\$6 Billion in Contracts Reviewed, Pentagon Says](#)

New York Times – 21 September 2007

Military officials said Thursday that contracts worth \$6 billion to provide essential supplies to American troops in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan — including food, water and shelter — were under review by criminal investigators, double the amount the Pentagon had previously disclosed. In addition, \$88 billion in contracts and programs, including those for body armor for American soldiers and matériel for Iraqi and Afghan security forces, are being audited for financial irregularities, the officials said. Taken together, the figures, provided by the Pentagon in a hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, represent the fullest public accounting of the magnitude of a widening government investigation into bid-rigging, bribery and kickbacks by members of the military and civilians linked to the Pentagon's purchasing system. Until the hearing on Thursday, the Army's most detailed public disclosure about the scale of the problem was that contracts worth \$3 billion awarded by the Kuwait office were under review. At the hearing, a panel of high-ranking Defense Department officials described a war-zone procurement system in disarray. They said that the Pentagon failed to provide adequate training for contracting officers for their assignments, offered insufficient oversight of contracting officers' activities and had not put in place early warning systems to catch officers who violated the law.

[French arms deal with Pakistan risks US ire](#)

Asia Times – 10 October 2007

The news last month that Pakistan is likely to get French air-to-air missiles (AAMs) and radar for its JF-17 fighter aircraft has raised some eyebrows in the US. The reason is that MICA AAMs produced by MBDA and RC-400 multimission radar built by Thales may enrich China's rapidly growing military capabilities if sold to Pakistan, since Islamabad is developing its fighter plane jointly with Beijing. The JF-17 is a lightweight multi-role fighter co-developed by Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and Chengdu Aircraft Industry Corporation under a joint venture of China and Pakistan. Thus, some observers say, the widely debated European Union arm systems ban against China may finally be circumvented, in such a way that it could damage US efforts to keep Beijing's air power at disadvantage vis-a-vis Taiwan. As some Indian and Pakistani sources have pointed out, French-built Mirage fighters owned by Taiwan are actually equipped with such missiles and radar. Taiwan and India are obviously concerned with China's military build-up. If China gets the chance to closely look at French advanced technology in possession of Taipei, Beijing could theoretically become capable of countering it effectively.

[Thales wins air defence contract with Saudi Arabia](#)

Reuters – 11 October 2007

France's Thales (TCFP.PA: Quote, Profile, Research) said on Thursday it has won a contract worth 125 million euros (\$176.6 million) to supply an electronic air defence system to the Saudi Air Force. The system, known as Al Madhallah (the Umbrella), comprises an electronic warfare centre with six regional hubs as well as mobile centres to train missile battery personnel, the statement said.

ENERGY SECURITY

[Obama Proposes 35% Cut in Use of Foreign Oil by 2030](#)

Bloomberg – 8 October 2007

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, saying the U.S. faces an "energy crisis," is calling for the U.S. to reduce its dependence on foreign oil 35 percent by 2030. Obama, in excerpts of a speech prepared for delivery today in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, laid out a plan to combat global climate change, reduce dependence on oil, and create jobs by investing in "climate-friendly" industries. "Our energy problem has become an energy crisis because no matter how well intentioned the promise, no matter how bold the proposal, they all fall victim to the same Washington politics that has only become more divided and dishonest," said Obama, 46, an Illinois senator. Obama proposed investing \$150 billion over the next 10 years to develop and produce climate-friendly energy supplies and create millions of jobs while protecting the U.S. manufacturing base. His main opponent in the race for the Democratic nomination, New York Senator Hillary Clinton, earlier this year proposed a \$50 billion strategic energy fund to boost research in alternative technologies, using money raised by imposing fees on oil company profits. She reiterated that plan today in Iowa as part of an overall "economic blueprint" for the country.

[Russia, Ukraine Settle Gas Dispute; European Energy Crisis Averted](#)

ANH – 8 October 2007

Ukraine and Russian gas company Gazprom agreed Monday to settle a \$1.3 billion unpaid gas bill owed by Kiev, averting an international fuel crisis that threatened to effect the energy markets of central and western Europe. The dispute is expected to end Tuesday with the signing of an official agreement on payment terms for the gas debts accumulated by Ukraine. The European Commission stepped in to settle the dispute, calling for a speedy solution in an effort to prevent a similar gas cut-off in 2006 that affected parts of the continent. The agreement is the result of a meeting between Ukrainian Energy Minister Yuriy Boiki and Gazprom officials. Gazprom, Russia's state-owned gas company, had been going after unpaid oil bills, accumulated by several former Soviet Bloc nations. In August, a dispute with Belarus forced Russia to cut gas deliveries by half in an effort to collect on a \$500 million outstanding balance. Moscow, however,

stressed its policy of cutting off supplies is not a bullying tactic. The conflicts started after Russia adjusted the price of gas to market levels, ending several years of favorable deals for client nations. Since price subsidies ended in Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia, a bitter fight over whether or not the countries will pay has ensued.

[Report links energy crisis to security](#)

The Age – 11 October 2007

An energy crisis could pose security risks for Australia by pushing fragile states in the region towards collapse, a report has warned. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute said in the report that such a threat should be factored into foreign and defence policy. It said the increasing dependence of the world on energy from unstable regions like the Middle East meant obtaining an adequate supply of affordable energy would become a bigger part of most nations' security plans. "Australia's self-sufficiency in oil products is declining markedly, and like most other Asia-Pacific states, Australia will become increasingly dependent on imports from the Middle East in the next decades," the document said. The institute said that Australia's smaller neighbours would be most vulnerable if energy supplies were threatened.

MILITARY OPERATIONS

[U.S. will keep closer watch on Blackwater operations in Iraq](#)

Dallas Morning News – 6 October 2007

USA's heavily armed private guards will soon have company when they escort U.S. embassy convoys through the dangerous streets of Baghdad: video cameras and federal agents. Dozens of special agents from the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security will be sent to Baghdad to accompany the Blackwater escorts, whose armored vehicles will now be mounted with video cameras to record every move a convoy makes. At the same time, radio traffic between the embassy and such convoys will be recorded. The measures ordered by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice are the first concrete response by the U.S. government to the Sept. 16 episode involving several Blackwater teams that left as many as 17 Iraqis dead in central Baghdad. Blackwater is one of three private companies providing security services to the State Department in Iraq. The new rules will initially apply only to Blackwater because they cover only Baghdad, where the company operates. They could be expanded to include the other two firms, Dyncorp and Triple Canopy, which work in the north and south of Iraq, said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

[Ban Ki-moon appoints Pakistani general as new UN military adviser](#)

Associated Press of Pakistan – 9 October 2007

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed a senior Pakistani general as the new military adviser of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), his spokesperson announced Monday. Lieutenant General Ahmad Shuja Pasha will succeed

the acting Military Adviser, General Per Arne Fjervang of Norway, Spokesperson Michele Montas told a regular news briefing at UN Headquarters in New York. General Pasha will hold the rank of Assistant Secretary General, the highest-ever military appointment given to a Pakistani in the DPKO.

[Canadian soldier threatened with execution by angry Afghan troops](#)

The Canadian Press – 11 October 2007

A Canadian soldier was threatened with summary execution by enraged Afghan National Army troops last winter after being involved in a friendly-fire shooting, military police records show. The sun had just peeked above an unusually hazy horizon the morning of Feb. 12, 2007, when the gunner on an RG-31 Nyala truck mistakenly opened fire on an Afghan Army pickup truck on a desert road east of Kandahar. An Afghan platoon commander, 23-year-old Lt. Abdul Hadi, the driver of the vehicle, was badly wounded in the arm and hand. He had missed repeated warning signs that he stop as his truck came on a broken down Canadian logistics convoy. Within minutes of the shooting a tense standoff developed, as the Afghans demanded the hapless gunner be handed over to them. From his seat in the heavily armoured truck the soldier who had pulled the trigger "observed one ANA soldier slide his finger across his throat, insinuating he was going to kill him," says a summary report prepared by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service. The report was obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act.

[Warning to Turkey on raids into Iraq](#)

Sydney Morning Herald – 11 October 2007

Turkey took a step towards a military operation in Iraq as its political and military leaders issued a statement authorising troops to cross the Iraqi border to eliminate separatist Kurdish rebel camps in the north. The move came in the face of strong opposition by the US, which is anxious to maintain peace in Iraq's north, one of the rare areas of stability in conflict-torn Iraq. More than two dozen Turkish soldiers have been killed in recent days, and the Government of the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, appears far more determined than before to act decisively. A government official said preparations were under way to seek parliamentary approval for a border military operation, a request that would be the first formal step towards an offensive. The request could be submitted to parliament this week. Government offices and institutions have been ordered to "take all economic and political measures, including cross-border operations when necessary, in order to end the existence of the [terrorist] organisation in a neighbouring country", said the statement, released by the Prime Minister's office after the meeting with leaders in Ankara. A Turkish military offensive into northern Iraq, while unlikely, would have far-reaching consequences for the US. Turkey is a NATO member and has the region's most powerful army. Turkey's support of the US in the Iraq war is crucial. Washington's Incirlik base in Turkey supplies the military in central Iraq. The US has warned against a unilateral incursion into Iraq.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[Nuclear Proliferation Still the Top U.S. Security Threat](#)

ABC News – 1 October 2007

When Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stood before the U.N. General Assembly last week and defended his country's nuclear program, the United States immediately pressed for new sanctions against Iran. Nuclear proliferation is an advancing threat. Fifteen years ago, there were three undeclared nuclear weapons states -- Israel, India and Pakistan -- and five declared -- the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China. Today Iran is on track to become the 10th nation with nuclear capabilities.

[Nuclear Secrets](#)

Wall Street Journal – 2 October 2007

Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld famously kept a satellite photograph of the Korean Peninsula in his office at the Pentagon. The picture was taken at night and showed a brightly illuminated South Korea under a sea of darkness where the North was known to be. Only the city of Pyongyang gave off a faint glow. The photo could serve as a metaphor for the six-party nuclear-disarmament talks, which keep getting murkier when they should be opening more to world scrutiny. They adjourned Sunday without the agreement the diplomats were promising, though with a draft plan the parties are taking home to their superiors for comment and whose details remain secret. Granted, diplomacy requires some confidentiality, but transparency and verification are crucial to disarmament, especially when dealing with a regime like Kim Jong Il's. The February 13 six-party accord called for Pyongyang to deliver a comprehensive accounting of its nuclear program and arsenal within 60 days. We're still waiting. Transparency is all the more essential given recent news reports about likely North Korean nuclear proliferation in Syria. Washington says the main goal of the six-party talks is to prevent proliferation, and North Korea promised to cease and desist. Yet Pyongyang seems to have been caught in the act in Syria only months after making that promise. The Israelis were worried enough to risk a confrontation with Syria by bombing the site, not to mention flying over Turkish air space. Notably, the Turks didn't object.

[Fox calls for action to tackle nuclear proliferation](#)

Guardian Unlimited – 10 October 2007

Liam Fox today gave a stark warning of the nuclear terrorist threat as he criticised the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) for fuelling the problem. The shadow defence secretary called for a "more proactive policy" to deal with the terrorist threat facing the 21st century as he outlined "the clear and present threat not only to our security but to our entire way of life". In a public lecture at Kings College, London, Mr Fox said he wanted to give "a little jolt to the system" to get things moving to stave off nuclear proliferation, which he said was "virtually inevitable" under current international policy. We need a more proactive policy than we have now." He made the case for persuading all nuclear states to lock down all weapons and nuclear material "in a much higher secure state than

has occurred up until now". Dr Fox said: "Here we face a major problem in that the provisions of the NPT allow the development of civil nuclear power whose technology can easily be used to develop weapons grade nuclear materials." He added: "The time is surely coming for us to revisit the NPT, especially article IV. Unless the international community develops new controls and ownership of both nuclear fuels and spent fuels and unless there are clear economic incentives for countries to accept this new authority, with the major powers willing to effectively police it, then we are asking for trouble."