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Articles from subscriber only sites are available on request. Révolutionnaire is edited by Samuel Chan, 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 rocket fire 'falls sharply'](#)

BBC – 12 November 2007

Rocket and mortar attacks in Iraq are reported to have fallen to their lowest levels for nearly two years. The US military said such attacks in October fell to 369, half the level during October 2006. This is the third month running of reduced rocket fire. Mortar and rocket attacks in Baghdad showed a similar pattern, falling to 53 in October from more than 200 in June. US officials said this was in part due to the US troop surge for the capital launched in February. Other reasons for the reduction were the discovery of arms caches following tip-offs from Iraqis, the killing of more insurgents and successful reconciliation campaigns, US military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel James Rikard said. US commanders and Iraqi officials have been briefing regularly that violence levels have dropped. This appears to be supported by figures from Iraqi ministries on the death toll in Iraq - 887 Iraqis were killed in October, up on the September figure but significantly lower than the 1,992 deaths recorded in January 2007. Some US military officials have said that al-Qaeda in Iraq, the group believed to be behind many of the biggest suicide bombings, has been driven out of Baghdad. Other senior US officers warned recently that the downward trend in violence was not yet irreversible. On Sunday, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki said that car bombs and roadside bombings in Baghdad had dropped by 77% compared to levels prior to the launch of the US troop surge.

[US group: Iraqis face wide-raging problems in Mideast, detentions in Lebanon](#)

AP – 12 November 2007

Iraqi refugees face a wide array of problems in the Middle East, from lack of basic assistance to political obstacles, and are being increasingly detained in Lebanon, a U.S. group advocating refugee protection said in a report Monday. The report by the Washington-based Refugees International was issued after its team visited Lebanon, Syria and Egypt for a month to gauge what homeless Iraqis deal with. An advance copy of the report, dated Nov. 14, was made available to The Associated Press. The report claimed Lebanese authorities have detained hundreds of Iraqis who entered the country illegally. It recommended the United States do more to assist Iraqi refugee across the region and also upgrade the U.S. diplomatic presence in Syria, the country that has had to deal with the bulk of Iraqis fleeing the violence in their homeland. A regional coordinator for assistance and resettlement of Iraqis should be appointed, the report said, adding that policies by the governments of host countries impede the humanitarian response to the crisis. The report highlighted the plight of Iraqis in Lebanon, where an estimated 50,000 Iraqi refugees live. Lebanon's history of sectarian violence and its stated refusal to act as an asylum country has led authorities to deny Iraqis any rights or access to services, the report said. Michel Kassarji, head of the Lebanese Chaldean Church which has a following in Iraq, put the number of Iraqis in Lebanon at about 80,000. Kassarji urged for international pressure on Lebanon to give the refugees temporary residence.

[US Military Deaths in Iraq at 3,861](#)

AP – 13 November 2007

As of Monday, Nov. 12, 2007, at least 3,861 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 eight military civilians. At least 3,146 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 Friday at 10 a.m. EST. The British military has reported 171 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.

[Afghanistan: NATO Faces Accusations](#)

New York Times – 13 November 2007

NATO forces in Afghanistan may be breaching their own operating rules by handing detainees to Afghan security services despite reports that they torture their prisoners, the human rights group Amnesty International said. The fact that reports of torture and mistreatment are now widely circulated makes the NATO-led force complicit when it hands over detainees, the group said. "Such transfers should be suspended until effective safeguards are in place," said Claudio Cordone, the group's senior research director.

[UN Chief Worried About Darfur Force](#)

AP – 13 November 2007

The U.N. chief appealed to the Sudanese government and other U.N. member states to help speed the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in Darfur, expressing concern at repeated delays. "I am concerned that the security incidents over the past month and the continuing delays in the deployment of UNAMID (African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur) could lead to a further deterioration in the situation on the ground," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a report officially released Monday. Ban said deteriorating security and increased violence on both sides in recent months, including an attack on an African peacekeeping base in late September that left 10 people dead, "suggests the need to deploy a robust and credible force to Darfur is urgent." He appealed to the Sudanese government to approve a list of potential troop-contributing countries to the 26,000-strong joint U.N.-AU force, which is meant to assume responsibility for Darfur on Dec. 31. At Sudan's insistence, the U.N. Security Council agreed that the force be predominantly African. But Ban said that a list provided to Sudan on Oct. 2 still hasn't been approved. Ban also called on member states to provide necessary military equipment, particularly helicopters, for the hybrid force. The U.N. has not yet received any pledges for military helicopters, which are necessary for the mission's success, he said.

[War costs could total \\$1.6 trillion by 2009, panel estimates](#)

CNN – 13 November 2007

The total economic impact of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is estimated at \$1.6 trillion by 2009, a congressional committee said in a report released Tuesday. That is nearly double the \$804 billion in direct war costs the White House requested so far from Congress, the Democratic-led Joint Economic Committee said. The committee estimated \$1.3 trillion in war costs by the end of 2008 for Iraq, and the remainder for Afghanistan. The total war costs could grow to \$3.5 trillion by 2017, the committee estimated. The higher total economic impact comes from, among other things, the cost of borrowing money to pay for the war, lost productivity, higher oil prices and the cost of health care for veterans, the committee said. The committee calculated the average cost of both wars for a family of four would be \$20,900 from 2002 to 2008. The cost for a family of four would go up to \$46,400 from 2002 to 2017, the committee said.

COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Iraqi Shiites call for probe into 'Iranian terrorist' activity](#)

CNN – 22 November 2007

More than 300,000 Iraqi Shiites have signed a petition calling for an end to what they say are "Iranian terrorist interferences in Iraq" and demanding the United Nations investigate the Islamic republic's involvement in Iraq. The petition seems to represent a kink in the cozy relationship between the two nations, who share the Shiite faith and whose friendliness toward each other has raised the concerns of U.S. officials. The United States considers Iran a sponsor of terrorism and has been at the forefront of a bitter battle over Iran's nuclear program. The U.S. suspects Iran intends to develop nuclear weapons, but Tehran says its program has only peaceful aims. On Tuesday -- the same day Baghdad, Tehran and Washington announced a new round of talks regarding Iraqi security issues -- the Iraqi Shiite groups announced they had completed the six-month process of gathering signatures for the petition. The petition has the support of 14 members of the clergy and 600 sheiks. It also was signed by 25,000 women, the release stated. "The most painful stab on the back of the Shiites in Iraq by the Iranian regime has been its shameful abuse of Shiite religion to achieve its ominous ends," the petition states.

[From Scots college to jihad - first man in UK convicted over terrorist propaganda](#)

The Scotsman – 22 November 2007

A Pakistani man who travelled to Britain to study at a Scottish university yesterday became the first person in the UK to be convicted of spreading terrorist propaganda. A court heard Abdul Rahman, 25, acted as a recruiting sergeant who tried to persuade British Muslims to join in a "holy war". He arrived in the UK in September 2004 on a student visa - ostensibly to study biotechnology at Abertay University in Dundee - but left the city after only one day. Rahman later claimed he was "unable to settle in this

culture". Moving to Manchester, he joined a radical cell who believed in fighting a holy war and viewed people who did not believe in their particular brand of Islam as "legitimate targets", the court was told. The group saw the fighting in Afghanistan as an unjust assault on Muslims and believed in the need to recruit fighters and resources for the conflict. At Manchester Crown Court yesterday, Rahman pled guilty to possessing articles for the purpose of terrorism; dissemination of terrorist propaganda; and aiding or abetting the breach of a control order. He had faced the more serious charge of assisting another to commit or prepare a terrorist act, which carries a maximum life sentence on conviction. However, under a plea-bargain deal, he confessed to the three other charges after the judge, Clement Goldstone, indicated he would only be jailed for a maximum of six years.

[Track money trails to combat terrorism call](#)

Gulf Daily News – 22 November 2007

Financial records and audits provide "blueprints of the architecture" of terrorist organisations, a top banker said yesterday. "By following money trails through financial information sharing worldwide, we can unearth terrorist cells and networks, and save lives," Ithmaar Bank chief executive officer Michael Lee told delegates at the Middle East: Homeland and Global Security Forum. "The maintenance of terrorist networks and acquisition and development of lethal weapons is expensive, even if a particular attack does not prove costly in isolation," he added. "Identifying and isolating the sources of funding for terrorist groups incapacitates not only their execution of attacks, but also their ability to maintain international alliances for creating infrastructures around the world for recruitment and training, and to purchase or develop deadly weapons." Mr Lee was speaking at a session on the protection of financial institutions from terrorist penetration. "Through capacity building, a country can reinforce its legal, financial regulatory, financial intelligence, law enforcement, and judicial capabilities to combat terrorist financing." And the international community, by leveraging its resources to assist countries with meeting the challenges posed by terrorist financing, can better safeguard financial systems against abuse by terrorist financiers around the world.

[US Middle-East policies aiding terrorism: Vice-President](#)

The Times of India – 23 November 2007

Vice-President Hamid Ansari's comment that "US policies have given an impetus to terrorism" in the Middle-East while giving a pass to Iran's nuclear programme is not merely very different from government policy, it has all the ingredients of a diplomatic faux pas. Addressing a think tank here on the "emerging security concerns in West Asia" on Wednesday, Ansari, who was a part of the research programme at the institute before he was elected vice-president, declared that US policies were aiding terrorism and suggested that Iran's nuclear programme was reasonably benign. He quoted non-proliferation analyst David Albright, a known opponent of India's quest for nuclear energy, to say that Iran's enrichment programme was not competent enough and it "still had a way to go". Since Albright's assessments of India's nuclear programme have been debunked and India has officially expressed its displeasure at Iran's nuclear ambitions,

the Vice-President's comments, which are at odds with government policy, have raised eyebrows throughout the government. On the US role in West Asia, Ansari said, "The United States today is not the sole superpower of the spring of 2003. The policies of unilateralism, creative destruction and pre-emption have faltered. The US has been mauled by non-state actors in Iraq; its policies have given an impetus to terrorism; it has lost domestic support for its Iraq policy; its unpopularity levels are alarmingly high in Arab and Muslim countries and its intentions are suspected." While this may well be the view of many people in the world and even diplomats and politicians, it is certainly not the official position of the government of India.

DEFENCE STRATEGY

[SCO's UN Representative expresses concern over situation in Afghanistan](#)

SCO Secretariat News – 12 November 2007

In a statement on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation made during the plenary session of the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan, the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan at the United Nations Sirodjidin Aslov expressed concern over the increasing activity of Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. He called to prevent terrorists from involvement in the country's governmental institutions and to cut off their sources of funding coming mainly from drugs trafficking, the UN News Centre reports. "The subject of our concern is a sky-rocketing growth in illegal drugs production with financial means obtained from their sale being spent, among other purposes, on purchasing weapons and ammunition", — the Ambassador said. He called to step up counterterrorism efforts not only on the territory of Afghanistan, but also through the creation of a network of antiterrorist and financial security belts under the coordination of the United Nations and with the involvement of neighbouring states. Sirodjidin Aslov stressed that all the SCO member states support the idea of creating antinarcotic security belts along the Afghan border, proposed by Tajikistan and Russia. He reminded that in the follow-up to this idea Moscow put forward an initiative to set up a financial security belt around Afghanistan and called on the financial intelligence units to join this work.

[Iran-Afghanistan-Demarcation](#)

IRNA – 13 November 2007

Iran has recently started largest and major demarcation project at its long border lines with Afghanistan in east of the country, it was reported on Tuesday. The project is being carried out by geographical organization of Iran's Defense Ministry, the ministry's Public Relations Office said. The project, to be launched along the 949 km of Iran-Afghanistan border areas, will demarcate 709 km of land and 236 km of sea border between the two neighboring states. This is the first time that Iran and Afghanistan border areas are being demarcated over the past 100 years. The project which has security, economic and development applications, is estimated to cost over rls 30bn. After completion, the project would be registered at the United Nations, the report added.

[ASEAN defence ministers sign Joint Declaration to deepen cooperation](#)

Channel NewsAsia – 14 November 2007

In what has been described as a "significant milestone", ASEAN Defence Ministers have signed a Joint Declaration to deepen cooperation and promote regional stability. This took place in Singapore during the second ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting on Wednesday. ASEAN defence forces have been interacting for many years through joint exercises. And more of such training, seminars and workshops will be conducted to address transnational security challenges like terrorism, maritime security and infectious diseases. Signing the Joint Declaration will provide a framework for dialogue and decision making in the ASEAN defence sector. The gathering of ASEAN's defence ministers is significant on many fronts. Singapore's Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean said it not only plays an important role in enhancing regional peace and security, but also ensures that the defence sector remains actively engaged and plugged into the external environment, in view of globalisation. The defence ministers are also committed to the realisation of the ASEAN Security Community by 2015, which is part of a vision to integrate the 10-member bloc. Another area for cooperation is humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

['Russia plans missiles in Belarus'](#)

CNN – 14 November 2007

A senior general warned Wednesday that Russia could deploy short-range missiles to Belarus as part of efforts to counter the planned deployment of U.S. missile defense sites in Europe, Russian news reports said. Col. Gen. Vladimir Zaritsky, the chief of artillery and rocket forces for the Russian Ground Troops, said that "any action meets a counteraction, and this is the case with elements of the U.S. missile defense in Poland and the Czech Republic," the ITAR-Tass news agency reported. The U.S. plan would install a radar base in the Czech Republic and 10 interceptor missiles in Poland -- both former Soviet satellites that are now NATO members. It is part of a wider missile shield involving defenses in California and Alaska that the United States says are to defend against any long-range missile attack from countries such as North Korea or Iran. Russia strongly opposes the idea, saying Iran is decades away from developing missile technology that could threaten Europe or North America, and it says the U.S. bases will undermine Russia's own missile deterrent force.

[Iran does not want to use oil as a weapon: Ahmadinejad](#)

AFP – 19 November 2007

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Sunday that Iran never wanted to use oil as a weapon, but if the US attacked the country it would "know how to react." "We would never want to use oil as a weapon or take any illegal actions," he told a press conference here, adding: "but if America takes any action against us we will know how to reply." Fear that a US attack on Iran could lead the Islamic Republic to stop its oil exports or block key shipping channels for oil tankers in the Straits of Hormuz is one of the factors that has driven oil prices to record highs in recent years. He predicted however

that hostilities would not break out. "My prediction is that no war will break in the region," he said. "Our assessment is that this region will not witness a war. There is no cause for concern ... America and its allies are incapable of launching a strike against us." "If they (the US) commit a new mistake, all the region will become an unsavoury place for them. They will have no place in the region whatsoever," he added. The Iranian president said the Gulf oil monarchies, among the region's closest US allies, will not assist any US war on his country. "We are brothers. All of them have said they will not allow the use of their territory against Iran" Ahmadinejad was speaking on the sidelines of a meeting of leaders of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

[India, China to hold counter-terrorism exercise](#)

United Press International – 20 November 2007

India and China plan to hold their first joint military exercise in December with army troops from both countries participating in counter-terrorism training in China. The Times of India reported this week that the exercise will involve some 100 soldiers, but will go a long way toward improving relations between the world's No. 1 and No. 3 armed forces. China and India fought a brief but bitter border war in 1962, which was won by China. Mutual suspicion and border disputes linger. The decision to hold the exercise was finalized recently at the inaugural Annual Defense Dialogue between the two countries. "The two armed forces are upgrading military-to-military cooperation in a graduated manner, which began from setting up of the 'peace and tranquility' mechanism along the LAC," an unnamed Indian officer told the newspaper. LAC refers to the Line of Actual Control, the de facto border between the two countries. "This has graduated to holding of cultural and sports events between the forces deployed in border areas, allowing each other's military observers to military exercises and exchange of officers to military-training institutes," the officer said.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY

[F-15E Strike Eagles to fly again in Iraq, Afghanistan](#)

CNN – 15 November 2007

The Air Force is returning F-15E Strike Eagle jets to service over Iraq and Afghanistan after grounding other F-15s, the Air Force said Wednesday. The F-15s were grounded after a crash earlier this month in Missouri of an older model that disintegrated in flight. Each F-15E must pass an inspection of critical parts on the airframe before returning to flying missions, Air Force officials said. All U.S. Air Force 224 E-model aircraft will undergo a one-time inspection of hydraulic system lines, the Air Force statement said. The longerons – molded, metal strips of the aircraft fuselage that run from front to rear – will also be inspected, according to the Air Force. The straps and skin panels in and around the environmental control system bay will also be examined, officials said. The Air Force would not say whether the parts being inspected were part of the problem on the aircraft that crashed. Air Force officials said the rest of the almost 500 F-15s – older

airframes than the F-15Es – will remain grounded until the investigation offers a solution to what happened.

[Malaysian academic plays down reports of arms race with Indonesia](#)

Jane's Information Group – 20 November 2007

A Malaysian academic has denied that Malaysia and Indonesia's procurement of new submarines is part of a developing arms race in Southeast Asia. Dr Tang Siew Mun, a lecturer at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's School of History, Political and Strategic Studies, was quoted by Malaysia's state-controlled news agency as saying that funds will continue to limit procurement strategies in the region. "Are we worried? Should we buy more arms to compete with the Indonesians? The answer is no," said Mun. "The point is that even if we want to compete and have an arms race with other countries, we do not have the money to do that... more importantly, we do not have the need to do that because we don't see them as enemies."

[Admiral Gorshov delivery to be delayed](#)

United Press International – 20 November 2007

India acknowledged this week the delivery schedule for the Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshov is running slow and set up a panel to monitor work on the ship. "The Russian side has submitted a revised master schedule indicating a delay in the project," defense Minister A.K. Antony told Parliament in a written reply to a question. The aircraft carrier was due to be handed over to India's navy next year; there is no current time line for delivery. Indian news reports say Russia wants more money to retrofit the carrier, saying costs had exceeded their initial projections. The modified Live class aircraft carrier was sold to India in 2004; it is to be renamed INS Vikramaditya.

[Russia to participate in international defense technology exhibition](#)

RIA Novosti – 20 November 2007

A Russian delegation is to visit a defense technology exhibition set to take place on November 21-25 in Lima, Peru, the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation said on Tuesday. Representatives of military and business circles from Latin America, the U.S., Europe, and Israel are to attend the Defense Technology Exhibition SITDEF-2007 in the Peruvian capital. The Russian delegation will comprise of representatives of the Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation and Russia's state arms exporter Rosoboronexport. The exhibition is to feature armor, artillery, communication and air defense systems, engineering and demining equipment, as well as general purpose motor vehicles, the organizers said in a press release. Russian military products will not be exhibited in Lima, but the Russian delegation will carefully study the event with a view to the participation of Russian arms manufacturers in future exhibitions.

ENERGY SECURITY

[Map shows top CO2 producers in the world](#)

CNN – 16 November 2007

There's growing worry about global warming, but how much of it is the work of that power plant just outside town? And if Congress limits heat-trapping greenhouse gases, will it affect utility and electric bills? And who's the biggest corporate culprit when it comes to climate change? Answers to these questions may be only a couple of computer clicks away. A new interactive online database unveiled Wednesday provides maps, color-coded categories and detailed information about who is putting 10 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually from power plants around the world -- about a fourth of it from the United States. The Web site, which includes information from 4,000 utilities and 50,000 plants, shows not only the biggest CO2 emitters, but also the facilities and companies that are most green, releasing little if any carbon. "We're trying to provide complete, balanced information. It's an open site," said David Wheeler, a senior researcher at the Center for Global Development, where he directed the creation of the massive database. Using an array of information filters, a user can find out how much CO2 comes from electricity plants in a particular city or county, in a congressional district, from a specific company, or an individual plant. Dubbed the Carbon Monitoring for Action database, or CARMA (www.carma.org), it proclaims itself as "the world's best place for power-plant voyeurism." And there is a bundle of interesting information.

Highest CO₂ Emitting Power Plants in the World



[U.S. greenhouse gas emissions could increase more quickly](#)

Xinhua – 20 November 2007

U.S. greenhouse gas emissions could grow more quickly in the next 50 years than in the previous half-century, and technological change may cause increased emissions rather than control them, according to a new study released Monday. Technology itself cannot be relied on as the most efficient tool for reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions or solving the global energy crisis, said Professor Emeritus Richard Eckaus of the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Department of Economics and his co-author, Ian Sue Wing, of Boston University. In a paper published in the November issue of Energy

Policy they portrayed the changing interplay among technology, energy use and CO2 emissions based on a simulation of the U.S. economy. "We found that, in spite of increasing energy prices, technological change has not been responsible for much reduction in energy use, and that it may have had the reverse effect," said Eckaus. The researchers studied the periods 1958 to 1996 and 1980 to 1996 and projected from 2000 to 2050. Based on their findings from the past 50 years, and adjusting for a more realistic expectation for technological changes, they found that the rates of growth for energy use and emissions may accelerate from the historical rates of 2.2 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively. Eckaus acknowledged it has become counter-intuitive to question technology's potential to solve the energy problem. But U.S. steel making illustrates how fossil fuel consumption can increase along with technological change: Steelmakers' furnaces are now electrical, reducing coal use at the plant. But coal generates some of the electricity that powers the factory furnace, resulting in more CO2 emissions. "There is no a priori reason [reason independent of experience] to think technology has the potential for reducing energy use while meeting the tests of economics," Eckaus said. Technology is not the magic bullet for cutting fossil fuels.

[Oil prices dip after flirting with 100 dollars](#)

AFP – 22 November 2007

World oil prices eased on Thursday, one day after striking record peaks near to 100 dollars per barrel on concerns over weak crude supplies and the falling dollar. Investors took a cautious stance to protect their positions since US floor trading was shut Thursday owing to the Thanksgiving holiday, analysts said. New York's main contract, light sweet crude for January delivery, fell 39 cents to 96.90 dollars per barrel in electronic trade. The contract had hit an historic high of 99.29 dollars on Wednesday. Elsewhere Thursday, London's Brent North Sea crude for January delivery slipped 21 cents to 94.63 dollars per barrel, after striking an all-time peak of 96.53 dollars on Wednesday. "We have come up just short of 100 dollars twice now, so there is strong resistance (there)," Sudden analyst Michael Davies said in London. Oil prices had failed to top 100 dollars per barrel on Wednesday, despite official data which showed that US energy stockpiles fell more heavily than expected last week. David Moore, a commodity strategist with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, said he had expected prices to rise after the disappointing US energy report. "I thought the inventory data would be supportive of the market," Moore said. "It may have been investors were cautious ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday." The US Department of Energy (DoE) announced Wednesday that reserves of US crude oil had sunk by 1.1 million barrels in the week ending November 16. Analysts' consensus forecast had been for a gain of 750,000 barrels. The DoE added that US reserves of distillates, including crucial heating fuel and diesel, dived by 2.4 million barrels last week. That was far heavier than market expectations for a drop of 450,000 barrels. Heating fuel demand is expected to pick up as the Northern hemisphere winter kicks in next month. The US northeast region is the world's biggest user of heating oil. Moore said the market can expect continued volatility in the weeks ahead as tight global supplies and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East continue to worry investors. "The oil prices are certainly volatile and the outlook is obviously subjected to a lot of uncertainty. For that reason, we will see oil prices move higher in the near term ... it is

still possible for oil prices to go above 100 dollars," he added. Crude oil prices have surged by about 64 percent since the start of 2007, supported by supply disruptions in key producers such as Nigeria, geopolitical jitters over the Iranian nuclear crisis, and strong demand from China and India. Oil prices were also winning support from a troubled dollar, which is striking a series of record low points against the surging euro. A weak greenback encourages demand for dollar-priced commodities because they become more attractive to investors using stronger currencies.

MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

[Viability of UN-AU peacekeeping force in Darfur at risk, warns top UN official](#)

United Nations News – 14 November 2007

The lack of offers from Member States for key ground transport and aviation units and the Sudanese Government's unwillingness so far to approve the presence of non-African units means the hybrid United Nations peacekeeping mission planned for the war-torn Darfur region could fail, a senior UN official warned today. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno told reporters that if the joint UN-African Union operation – known as UNAMID – does not have the necessary capacities in critical areas by the start of next year, when it is due to take over from the existing AU mission, it may not be wise to deploy the force. "It is a terrible dilemma, because on the one hand, you can say that a force, even if it doesn't have all the assets, can make a limited difference for a number of people in Darfur, and that is something in itself which is good," he said. "On the other hand, if that force was to know humiliation in the early stages of its deployment, then it would be very hard to recover from such a humiliation. So it's an extremely difficult decision to make." Mr. Guéhenno spoke after briefing Security Council members on the latest developments regarding UNAMID, which is aiming to quell the conflict between rebels, Government forces and allied militia that has killed more than 200,000 people and left 2.2 million others homeless since 2003. He said Council members and UN Secretariat officials remain worried that the mission will not be able to robustly carry out its mandate without the support of both the missing units and those that Sudan has not yet approved.

[KRG Deputy PM: Turkish Military Operations Would Destabilize N Iraq](#)

CNN – 19 November 2007

Turkish cross-border operations into north Iraq would destabilize the region and exacerbate armed attacks by Kurdish rebels, Kurdish Regional Government Deputy Prime Minister Omar Fatah said Monday. Fatah, speaking through interpretation by a KRG representative, said instead, diplomatic channels could resolve escalating tensions by armed Kurdish rebels and the Turkish government, which has prepared for military operations into northern Iraq. The Turkish parliament has approved a resolution that would allow a military operation into northern Iraq in a bid to counter the PKK, the Kurdish Workers Party that has intensified attacks on Turkish troops on the border.

"Military intervention in Iraq by any of its neighbors will not solve any problems; it will exacerbate them," Fatah said at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Earlier this month, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he had been in contact with Syria and Iran about cooperation to combat PKK attacks. The Kurdish region of Iraq has not suffered the same volume of terrorist attacks as many other parts of Iraq, Fatah said. "To destabilize this secure region will have profound consequences on the stability of Iraq," he said, adding: "It will also be problematic for Turkey, because the instability will be on Turkey's border." "We're still hopeful that Turkey will not launch a cross-border operation," Fatah said. Besides other cross-border trade, Iraq exports oil through Turkey in the 1.6 million-barrel-a-day Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline. The deputy prime minister said the KRG won't offer logistical support to the PKK, won't allow PKK-affiliated political party activity, "and we will assure that the PKK has no safe passage through our region." Although Fatah said the KRG wanted "to move away from the tried and tested and failed centralized systems of government," he also said his regional government was committed to building a unified Iraq. "I want to reaffirm that we seek a democratic and federal Iraq ... and we do not have plans to secede from Iraq."

[U.S. says ready to face any Iranian threat](#)

Reuters – 22 November 2007

The United States military machine is undiminished after four years of fighting in Iraq and is more prepared than ever to face any threat from Iran, one of the U.S. military's most senior officials said. Admiral Timothy Keating, head of U.S. military operations in 41 countries, was speaking in Bahrain days after Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad labeled the U.S. army "shabby", and said his Western foes had "rusty and disabled weapons". Iran and the West are at loggerheads over the Islamic Republic's nuclear enrichment program, which the West suspects is for the development of a nuclear bomb, but Tehran says is for power generation. "I don't think our capability has diminished at all," said Keating, Commander of U.S. Pacific Command and former head of navy operations in the Gulf. Bahrain, an island close to Iran, is home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. Working with British and Australian ships, the fleet is tasked with maintaining stability in the region, and often conducts exercises on Iran's doorstep. "Because of our continued presence and exercises we've had... the Fifth Fleet and Central Command's ability to provide for peace and stability is even better than before," he told Reuters on Wednesday on his way to visit troops in Iraq. Washington, which also accuses Iran of backing insurgents in Iraq and funding terrorist groups, says it is committed to finding a diplomatic solution to the nuclear standoff, but has not ruled out military action if that fails. Iran, which denies charges of funding terrorism, says it is ready to act if attacked, but Ahmadinejad on a visit to Bahrain on Saturday said conflict was unlikely.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[U.N. losing grip on Iran nuke plan](#)

CNN – 15 November 2007

The U.N.'s nuclear watchdog admitted Thursday it was no longer in touch with how Iran's nuclear program was developing, even as Tehran continues its enrichment activities in defiance of sanctions. A report from International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei, said that while Iran has cooperated in several areas – by providing access to declared nuclear material, documents and facilities – it is withholding in others. "It should be noted that, since early 2006, the agency has not received the type of information that Iran had previously been providing," the report said. "As a result, the agency's knowledge about Iran's current nuclear program is diminishing." Iran's new nuclear negotiator, Dr. Saeed Jalili, disputed that statement in a news conference shortly after the report's release. He said Tehran has been transparent in response to all requests from the IAEA, and said his country now wants the rights to which it is entitled regarding its nuclear program. Jalili also warned that if the Security Council passes another resolution against Iran, future dealings would be in question.

[The German connection](#)

Haaretz – 23 November 2007

In early 2005, German customs police raided a series of German firms involved in a clandestine relationship with Vero, a Berlin-based front company that was illegally supplying nuclear technology and equipment to Iran. The smuggling operation involved 50 German companies and used a nuclear reactor in the Russian city of Rostov to hide the fact that it was supplying equipment to Bushehr, a port city in southern Iran. Bushehr is the site of a feverish attempt by Russians and Iranians to rebuild Iran's nuclear reactors. Iran's Islamic government insists that these efforts are aimed at a non-military nuclear program, yet intelligence experts believe Bushehr is the gateway to an Iranian nuclear weapons arsenal. Vero's now-defunct Berlin office served as an illegal conduit, operating throughout Germany, for Iran's nuclear program. Germany bars the sale of nuclear equipment and "technological support" to Iran and nine other nations, including Israel, without a special permit from the German Federal Office of Economics and Export Control (BAFA). The Russian government, however, is not required to secure such a permit. Thus, German engineering firms can easily circumvent export regulations by designating a country that is not among the 10 listed in the export control law. German companies are taking advantage of this procurement offensive, using longstanding German-Iranian trade relationships. The nuclear trail begins with the German electronics giant Siemens, also a major builder of nuclear power plants, which began work on the Bushehr plant in 1974. The Cold War period produced different nuclear plant designs in Western Europe and the former Soviet Union, which prevented exchanges of nuclear technology between Warsaw Pact and NATO countries. The technical specifications of Bushehr conform to a German design, and Russian components are therefore not compatible. This explains why the Iranians are aggressively attempting to obtain machinery and parts for Bushehr in Germany. As a result of the Islamic Revolution in

1979, Siemens and its subsidiary Kraftwerke (KWU) discontinued construction of the plant they had been building for the Iranians. But the companies still do business in Iran. The Iraqis bombed Iran's two reactors six times during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, severely damaging the plant and obliterating the entire core area of both reactors. In 1995, the Russians contracted with the Iranians to rebuild Bushehr for a total of \$800 million. Alex Vatanka, an Iranian-born specialist on the Middle East from Jane's Information Group, says, "There is not a lot of respect for Russian technology. That lack of respect is also reflected in popular views of Russia's activities in Iranian nuclear programs. And German technology goes down like butter on bread in Iran." The pervasive Iranian distrust of Russian equipment, and their preference for cutting-edge technology, further contributes to Iranian efforts to acquire parts for Bushehr in Germany.