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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

[ADF East Timor Deployment to Reduce – A Positive Sign Of Stability](#)

Press Release, Australian Government – October 22

The Australian Defence Force will reduce its total force presence in East Timor to approximately 650 personnel by early next year.

The reduction in the total number of deployed personnel under Operation ASTUTE is appropriate given improvements in the security situation in East Timor.

The Minister for Defence, The Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP said the Australian Government was encouraged by the growing ability of the East Timorese security agencies, with support from the United Nations, to deal with security.

“The East Timorese authorities have shown through their professional handling of the security situation that the time is now right for some drawdown of the Australian ISF presence,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

After the reduction in Australian troops, the International Stabilisation Force will total 790 Australian and New Zealand personnel.

Mr Fitzgibbon said that there is no change to the mission of the ISF and that Australian and New Zealand troops would continue to play a key role in East Timor’s security.

“The ISF will continue to provide security support to the Government of East Timor and the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) in order to maintain a stable environment,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

The Australian Government will also maintain the ability to rapidly reinforce the ISF at short notice if required, as was demonstrated earlier this year.

“Australia remains committed to supporting the Government of East Timor in developing its Defence Force and maintaining security and stability. The remaining ISF troops will continue to provide support to the UN and Timorese authorities,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Mr Fitzgibbon thanked the troops for all their hard work and sacrifice whilst serving in East Timor.

[The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao](#)
International Crisis Group – October 23

On 14 October 2008 the Supreme Court of the Philippines declared a draft agreement between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippines government unconstitutional, effectively ending any hope of peacefully resolving the 30-year conflict in Mindanao while President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo remains in office. The Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD or MOA), the culmination of eleven years' negotiation, was originally scheduled to have been signed in Kuala Lumpur on 5 August. At the last minute, in response to petitions from local officials who said they had not been consulted about the contents, the court issued a temporary restraining order, preventing the signing. That injunction in turn led to renewed fighting that by mid-October had displaced some 390,000.

The immediate task now is to prevent escalation and discourage the government and local officials from plans to arm civilians. Interested governments and donors should press both sides to keep existing ceasefire mechanisms in place, while quietly urging a return to talks. They can also take steps now to build or strengthen the institutions that a post-conflict Mindanao will need, even if peace seems a long way off.

The MOA was an extraordinary document intended as a roadmap for a so-called Comprehensive Compact or final peace treaty. It acknowledged the Muslims of Mindanao, the Bangsamoro, as a First Nation and laid the groundwork for setting up a Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) as their homeland. The BJE's relationship with the central government was defined as "associative", suggesting almost-equals. This, and the definition of ancestral domain, the territory to be included in the BJE, were the most controversial parts of the agreement. The revelation of the planned geographic scope led outraged local politicians, whose land would be affected and who had not been consulted during the negotiations, to demand an injunction. President Arroyo's opponents and potential successors after the 2010 elections also saw political advantage to be gained from condemning the MOA.

Once the injunction was granted, the president and her advisers announced the dissolution of the government negotiating team and stated they would not sign the MOA in any form. Instead they would consult directly with affected communities and implied they would only resume negotiations if the MILF first disarmed.

In the past when talks broke down, as they did many times, negotiations always picked up from where they left off, in part because the subjects being discussed were not particularly controversial or critical details were not spelled out. This time the collapse, followed by a scathing Supreme Court ruling calling the MOA the product of a capricious and despotic process, will be much harder to reverse.

While the army pursues military operations against three “renegade” MILF commanders – Ameril Umbra Kato, Abdullah Macapaar alias Bravo, and Aleem Sulaiman Pangalian – who attacked villages in North Cotabato and Lanao del Norte after the August injunction, the likelihood of full-scale war engulfing Mindanao seems low. Neither side has the resources to engage in sustained combat, and the generally moderate MILF leadership said after the 14 October ruling that it would not order its forces into battle. A few other individual commanders, however, could conclude that the strategy of pursuing peace had failed and join the “renegades”. Another possibility is that some of the few dozen foreign, mostly Indonesian, jihadis in Mindanao could decide to undertake retaliatory action, since Kato and Bravo have assisted them in the past. A major urban bombing could turn trigger a much wider conflict.

Looking ahead, if and when peace talks resume, the government will have to do a better job of heading off potential spoilers, through consultation or co-optation, and delivering what it promises. The MILF will have to show more backbone in dealing with errant commanders.

[China, Vietnam pledge to settle disputed borders, boost trade](#)

AFP – October 26

In a step to resolving long-running disputes, China and Vietnam have pledged to turn contentious border areas into economic growth zones and jointly explore oil-rich offshore areas in the future.

The communist neighbours -- who stress their comradely ties but also have a history of distrust and conflict -- reached the agreement during a visit by Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to Beijing, state media said.

Both countries are among claimants to the Spratly islands in the South China Sea, believed to be rich in oil and gas reserves, and claim sovereignty over the Paracel islands, which are occupied by China.

During Dung's visit, which ended Sunday, Beijing and Hanoi "agreed to start a joint survey in the waters outside the mouth of Beibu Bay (Gulf of Tonkin) at an early date," China's state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

They would "gradually advance the negotiations on demarcation of these maritime zones and will jointly exploit the zones," Xinhua said.

The statement did not settle the hot-button issue of the Spratlys, a strategic string of rocky outcrops in the middle of the South China Sea that are also claimed by Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia and the Philippines.

But China and Vietnam pledged to "collaborate on oceanic research, environmental protection, meteorological and hydrological forecasts, oil exploration and information exchanges by the two armed forces."

The agreement, although vague on details and timelines, signals a gradual shift in relations between East Asia's economic giant and the southern neighbour which for many centuries was ruled by China.

The South China Sea dispute -- in which Chinese naval vessels have in the past fired on Vietnamese fishing boats -- has in particular stirred strong nationalistic sentiments and sparked anti-Beijing street protests in Vietnam.

"The China-Vietnam joint declaration is a major confidence building measure between two potential protagonists," said veteran Vietnam-watcher Carl Thayer of the Australian Defence Force Academy.

"The agreement to begin work on demarcating waters outside the Tonkin Gulf will serve to reduce the area where clashes between fishermen and naval vessels are likely to occur," he told AFP.

Earlier this year Beijing angered Hanoi when it reportedly warned US oil giant Exxon Mobil Corp that it would be barred from operating in China unless it pulled out of a joint exploration deal with Vietnam.

Last week Dung and his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao oversaw the signing of a strategic cooperation pact between state-run China National Offshore Oil Corp and PetroVietnam, reports said without giving further details.

Both countries also reaffirmed they would complete demarcation of their 1,350-kilometre (840-mile) land border on schedule by the end of this year.

As recently as 1979 China and Vietnam fought a brief border war in the mountainous region when China, having backed Hanoi during the Vietnam war, sought to punish Vietnam for ousting Cambodia's China-backed Khmer Rouge.

Under both countries' plans, Vietnam's north is set to be transformed with industrial projects and new road and rail links that would connect China's Yunnan and Guangxi provinces with Vietnam's Haiphong seaport.

The 'economic corridors' -- part of a web of highways linking China with Southeast Asia -- would help boost annual two-way trade to a targeted 25 billion dollars by 2010 from 16 billion dollars last year.

Dung also visited China's Hainan province and proposed closer shipping links with Vietnam. Other deals included a 200-million-dollar joint industrial zone in Haiphong and a light-rail project in the capital Hanoi.

Thayer said the agreement "to proceed positively in contentious areas is a positive contribution to peace and security in the region."

"Both Premier Wen Jiabao and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung have demonstrated statesmanship in these troubled times by not letting the rancour of nationalism trump economic development," he said.

[Deadly blasts rock Indian state](#)

BBC News – October 30

At least 64 people have been killed in a series of bomb explosions in India's north-eastern state of Assam, the police say.

More than 300 others were injured in at least 18 blasts, the majority of them in the state capital, Guwahati.

The separatist United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa) denied any role in the blasts and blamed Indian "occupation forces" for engineering them.

Security forces have been fighting separatist rebels in Assam for decades.

The explosions in Guwahati and the towns of Kokrajhar, Barpeta Road and Bongaigaon occurred within an hour after 1100 local time (0530 GMT).

Four of the explosions ripped through busy markets in Guwahati while three others went off in the western town of Kokrajhar.

Fourteen people were killed in the first explosion in front of the deputy commissioner's office in Guwahati. Twenty-two others were killed in the second explosion at Ganeshguri near the state secretariat and four in Panbazar in central Guwahati, police say.

They say that 17 people died in the three explosions at Kokrajhar and five more in another explosion at Barpeta Road 130km (81 miles) from Guwahati in the west of the state.

Another blast was reported from near the oil refinery at Bongaigaon, between the towns of Kokrajhar and Barpeta Road.

Angry crowds

Most of the bombs were planted in cars, police say.

"A huge blast hit the bus just before the one I was travelling in. The bus got burnt at the front and pedestrians pulled out a lot of people hit by splinters and some

suffering burns as well," said engineering student Zinnia Brahma, an eyewitness in Guwahati.

A witness in Kokrajhar, Sanchaita Chakrabarty, told the BBC that a bomb went off just after she had bought vegetables from the local market.

"It happened as I walked away," she said. "The man I had bought the vegetables from was dead, many others around him were seriously injured. Just see how lucky I am to be alive."

Angry crowds attacked the police with stones after the blasts in Guwahati. Dozens of people were injured in the clashes, Reuters reports.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who represents Assam in the upper house of the Indian parliament, is going to the state on Friday.

Intelligence officials blamed Ulfa for the blasts.

But a statement issued by self-styled "lieutenant" Anjan Borthakur on behalf of Ulfa's "Military Council" said that the group was in no way connected with them.

The statement said Ulfa had been blamed as part of a "disinformation campaign" against the separatist group.

Most fighters in one of Ulfa's "strike battalions" have announced a ceasefire with the government - but two other battalions have not laid down their arms and the security forces have attacked and killed many of them in recent weeks.

"So the Ulfa is striking back in a massive way by taking on soft targets," Assam police chief RN Mathur said.

"No other group can trigger so many blasts in so many places in such a co-ordinated fashion."

He said most of the bombs had been planted in cars.

For the past 10 years, Ulfa has been blamed for bombings targeting gas and oil pipelines, oil depots and areas populated by migrant workers.

Assam police intelligence chief Khagen Sharma told the BBC that the latest bombings proved that Ulfa was "desperate for survival and does not mind killing even local people indiscriminately".

Failed peace talks

The group began an armed rebellion against what it describes as colonial rule by Delhi in 1979. Thousands of people have died in the violence.

An effort to start peace talks between the rebels and the Indian government broke down in 2006.

The rebels are seeking a separate homeland for the Assamese people and demanding that non-indigenous people, particularly Hindi and Bengali speakers, leave Assam.

There have been a number of major bomb attacks in India in the past few months, many of them blamed on local Islamist groups.

But local separatists have been held responsible for recent explosions in north-eastern cities.

Two north-eastern state capitals - Agartala in Tripura and Imphal in Manipur - saw serial explosions this month.

At least 20 people were killed and more than 100 injured in the blasts.

[Bangladesh Mobilizes Warships Over Gas Tensions](#)

Defense News – November 3

Bangladesh mobilized three warships and said it would take "all possible measures" to protect its territory Nov. 3 after accusing neighboring Myanmar of encroaching on its seawaters to hunt for gas.

Bangladesh will also send a high-level delegation to Myanmar to "defuse" tensions between the two countries, according to a statement issued by the foreign ministry.

Bangladesh's foreign minister Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said he had warned Myanmar's envoy to Dhaka that "all steps would be taken to protect the sovereignty and territory of Bangladesh."

The Bangladesh Navy warships took up position near disputed waters in the Bay of Bengal to face off with the Myanmar exploration fleet, top navy officials told an AFP correspondent in southeastern port city of Chittagong.

"Myanmar navy deployed four civil ships with survey team and equipment of a Korean exploration company at the front side at the disputed waters backed by its two warships from behind," an official said.

"We are observing the situation and have urged Myanmar navy to pull back their ships in a bid to ease tension," said a navy official. "We are on high alert."

On Nov. 2, Bangladesh summoned Myanmar's envoy to hand over a "strong protest note" over the reported intrusion of vessels to look for oil. The area in question has not been demarcated and both countries claim it as their own.

The Myanmar embassy in Dhaka said it had no official comment.

Myanmar has discovered huge reserves of natural gas in the Bay of Bengal and has expressed its intention to carry out further exploration in a stretch of the sea also claimed by Bangladesh.

The two countries have held a series of meetings in the past year aimed at resolving the disputes over the maritime boundary, including a meeting last month in Dhaka of senior ministers from both countries.

Early this year Bangladesh divided its sea territory into 28 blocks and auctioned off the area to international oil companies as part of its efforts to end chronic gas shortages in the once gas-rich country.

Myanmar immediately protested the move.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's border security forces said that four Bangladeshi woodcutters were killed after trespassing into Myanmar.

Colonel Naim of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) told AFP the woodcutters' mutilated bodies had been found late Nov. 2 by relatives two kilometers (1.2 miles) inside Myanmar at the foot of a hilly pass.

The two countries share a 90-kilometre unfenced border along hilly and porous terrain.

"We don't know whether they were killed by the Myanmar border forces or local people from Myanmar, but it appears that the four bodies had been tossed over a hill about 1,000 feet (300 meters) high," said Naim, who uses only one name.

He said the bodies were badly disfigured and officials in Bangladesh would be contacting border forces in Myanmar as part of their investigation into the killings.

"We have never had such deaths along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border before," he said.

[Pakistan Warns Petraeus Over Missile Strikes](#)

Defense News – November 3

President Asif Ali Zardari warned the new U.S. commander for Iraq and Afghanistan on Nov. 3 that missile strikes on Pakistani territory were "counterproductive" and detrimental to the 'war on terror.'

The most high-profile protest yet from Islamabad came as Gen. David Petraeus made his first visit here since he took over the position last week, amid claims that it could signal a shift in strategy in Afghanistan.

"Continuing drone attacks on our territory, which result in loss of precious lives and property, are counterproductive and difficult to explain by a democratically-elected government," Zardari said.

"It is creating a credibility gap," the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan quoted him as saying.

The series of strikes by unmanned drones against suspected al-Qaida and Taliban militants hiding in Pakistan's tribal badlands bordering Afghanistan have raised tensions between the two countries.

Defense Minister Chaudhry Ahmad Mukhtar earlier told Petraeus that Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected, warning that future incidents could affect the battle for hearts and minds.

"The frequent drone attacks could lead to generate anti-America sentiments as well as create outrage and uproar among the people," Mukhtar's department said in a statement.

Former Pakistani general and defense analyst Talat Masood said Petraeus' visit could not be underplayed - and was a sign of the increasing focus on Pakistan and disquiet about strategy to combat insurgents in Afghanistan.

By appointing Petraeus, a counter-insurgency specialist widely credited for progress in the Iraq conflict, Masood said the United States was signaling that it believes "it is not winning in Afghanistan."

"Gen. Petraeus is a professional, he knows it is a different war, he understands the dynamics and he may prevail upon the current and the next U.S. administration to review the policy," he added.

"He is probably the most suited person to bring a new and fresh approach in Afghanistan and in the tribal belt."

A U.S. Embassy spokesman played down claims that Petraeus was here because of fears at a spiral of Islamist violence that has seen a wave of deadly Taliban and al-Qaida suicide attacks, civil unrest and a crippled economy.

"This was a regular scheduled visit. This is something that has been on the books for quite some time," acting U.S. embassy spokesman Wes Robertson told AFP.

Petraeus, who was joined by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher and ambassador Anne Patterson, also met Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and military top brass.

Pakistan's security breakdown - and what to do about it - has become an election issue in the race for the White House, which culminates Tuesday when voters go to the polls.

Democratic hopeful Barack Obama has said that U.S. forces should act against militants inside Pakistani territory, including al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden, if Pakistan was "unable or unwilling to take them out."

But his Republican rival, John McCain, warned against such a strategy, instead urging cooperation and coordination between the two allies.

Bilateral tensions saw Patterson herself called in to the Pakistan foreign ministry Oct. 29 to register its opposition to the missile strikes.

But just two days later, two separate strikes killed 32 mainly al-Qaida operatives, according to Pakistani security sources.

All the strikes have been blamed on U.S.-led coalition forces or CIA-operated drones based in neighboring Afghanistan, where U.S. troops are engaged in escalating fighting with Taliban and other militants.

A U.S. official said last week that Washington is looking at negotiating with "reconcilable" members of the Taliban in Afghanistan who are prepared to give up violence and respect the Afghan constitution.

[80 Percent War Is Over With The LTTE - Sri Lanka Army Commander](#)

TNS – November 3

Sri Lankan Army Commander, Sarath Fonseka, who is widely regarded as a hardliner in the war front today claimed that his forces have killed more than 12,000 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadres and 80 % of the war between the Sri Lanka and the LTTE is over.

Sri Lankan Army Commander, Sarath Fonseka, has been recently accused by various groups in Sri Lanka as he is acting more like a politician than an Army Commander of the country when he claimed that he believes that Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalese and minorities in the country can live there but cannot ask for undue things, a political observer told *TNS* in Colombo.

Sarath Fonseka now has joined many of other high profile people who sought to finish the LTTE at least in the papers if they cannot do it in the battlefields, he added.

The Sri Lankan National Security minister in the UNP regime between 1984 and 87, Athulathmudali had aggressively pursued a 'dirty war' in the Tamil homelands and unleashed several unrestrained military offensives into the Northeast said he almost finished the LTTE.

In 1990, then Sri Lanka's Deputy Defence Minister, Ranjan Wijeratne, said I am going for all out for the LTTE.

"I finished the JVP. I will finish the LTTE. I will go for their leaders"

"I am going all out for the LTTE. I never do anything in half measures. I challenge Mr.Pirabaharan to come out in the open. He wants my head. I want his. I am going for him and his cohorts," he told a reporter then.

"Mr.Pirabaharan is not someone who has fallen from the sky. He is a human being and we will deal with him"

"Now they (the LTTE) are running without their shoes out. Very soon their pants will go too. There will be no LTTE or watch posts soon. (We will) flatten the LTTE"

Anuradha Rathwatha, the Deputy Defence minister in Chandirka's government claimed 90 percent war was over with the LTTE after capturing the Jaffna in 1995.

Sri Lanka for the past sixty years not demonstrated its political will or desire to reform itself to devolve the powers to the Tamils the observer added repeatedly focused on defeating the Tamils struggle without addressing the root causes he added.

[Palestinians die in Gaza clashes](#)

BBC News – November 5

At least six Hamas militants have been killed after Israel's first incursion into the Gaza Strip since June's truce.

Israel said its troops had uncovered a tunnel along central Gaza's frontier which had been dug by militants intending to abduct Israeli soldiers.

Clashes ensued when troops were sent to thwart the threat, Israel said. One militant died, Palestinian reports say.

A subsequent Israeli air strike on Hamas positions in southern Gaza killed at least five fighters, medics said.

An Israeli army spokeswoman said the air strike targeted militants who had fired mortars at Israeli forces.

Tuesday evening's fighting broke out after Israeli tanks and a bulldozer moved 250m into the central part of the coastal enclave, backed by military aircraft, says the BBC's Aleem Maqbool in Ramallah.

Residents of central Gaza's el-Bureij refugee camp said a missile fired from an unmanned Israeli drone flying over the area injured another three Hamas gunmen.

Rights violation

A truce between the two sides had held since it was declared on 19 June.

Israel said the raid was not a violation of the ceasefire, but rather a legitimate step to remove an immediate threat.

But the militant wing of Hamas said it would take revenge for what it said was an act of Israeli aggression that had violated the truce.

"Our response will be harsh, and the enemy will play a heavy price," the Islamist group said in a statement on its website.

Israel tightened a blockade on Gaza after Hamas took control there in June 2007.

Israel said the blockade, under which it has allowed little more than basic humanitarian aid into Gaza, was needed to isolate the militant group and stop it and other militants from firing rockets into Israel.

But a former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said earlier she had been taken aback by the "terrible" conditions for the Gaza Strip's 1.4m residents during a recent visit.

Mary Robinson told the BBC it was "almost unbelievable" the world did not care about what she called "a shocking violation of so many human rights".

[US Afghan air strike 'killed 40'](#)

BBC News – November 5

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said about 40 people were killed in a US air strike in southern Kandahar province.

Many more were wounded when a wedding party was hit. US officials confirmed civilian deaths and are investigating.

"We cannot win the fight against terrorism with air strikes," Mr Karzai said in comments directed at US President-elect Barack Obama.

Mr Karzai has repeatedly criticised the high level of civilian casualties in such bombings.

The latest civilian deaths underline the challenges facing the US president-elect and future commander-in-chief.

Demand

The incident happened late on Monday evening in Shah Wali Kot district, a remote part of Kandahar province.

International forces had been involved in an operation against the Taliban - an air strike was called in but the missile struck a wedding party by mistake, killing as many as 40 people, women and children among them.

"My wounded son was in my arms, right here, bleeding," the father of the bride, Roozbeen Khan, told AFP news agency. "He died last night.

"I lost two sons, two grandsons, a nephew, my mother and a cousin."

Villagers said a wedding lunch had just ended when someone, perhaps a Taliban fighter, fired at international troops on a nearby hill, AFP reported. The soldiers returned fire and called in air support.

A spokesman for US forces confirmed there had been civilian casualties and expressed sorrow for what had happened.

An investigation is under way into what went wrong.

In a statement, Mr Karzai demanded an end to civilian casualties.

"My first demand from the US president, when he takes office, would be to end civilian casualties in Afghanistan and take the war to places where there are terrorist nests and training centres," he told reporters.

The BBC's Ian Pannell in Kabul says there may be little sympathy for the Taliban in many parts of Afghanistan, but there is even less sympathy for coalition forces when incidents like this leave innocent Afghans dead.

It is likely to loom large in the new relationship between Presidents Karzai and Obama when the new US administration is sworn in, our correspondent says.

Deaths

Correspondents say that civilian casualties are hugely damaging to foreign forces trying to wage a "hearts and minds" campaign in Afghanistan.

Last month the US military said that air strikes on 22 August killed 33 Afghan civilians, many more than previously acknowledged.

And in another notorious incident, an Afghan parliamentary investigation in July found that a US air strike in the same month killed 47 civilians in the eastern province of Nangarhar.

Regional officials said those casualties were also attending a wedding party and that the bride had been killed.

Figures released in September by the United Nations said there had been a sharp increase in the number of civilian casualties - some caused by the coalition but most by the Taliban - in Afghanistan in 2008.

It said that from January to August 2008, 1,445 civilians were killed - a rise of 39% on the same period last year.

TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM

[Accused men sought violent jihad: court](#)

The Age – October 27

Six alleged Sydney jihadists obtained, or sought to acquire, a stockpile of chemical weapons capable of causing "substantial damage and loss of life", potential jurors have been told.

Counsel for the prosecution Richard Maidment SC said they were driven to wage violent jihad against the Australian public by fervent Islamic beliefs in martyrdom.

Mr Maidment on Monday addressed the first 220 potential jurors at the trial of Bradley Umar Sariff Baladjam, 31, Khaled Cheikho, 35, Moustafa Cheikho, 31, Mohamed Ali Elomar, 43, Abdul Rakib Hasan, 39, and 24-year-old Mohammed Omar Jamal.

The six have pleaded not guilty to conspiring to commit acts in preparation for a terrorist act, and are standing trial in the NSW Supreme Court.

Offering a "thumbnail sketch" of his case, Mr Maidment said the accused were among a group of at least nine western and south-western Sydney men allegedly planning one or more terror-related acts.

Literature, images and video were found in their possession which advocated the activities of "notorious persons such as Osama bin Laden" and the pursuit of martyrdom through jihad.

"Each of these men were apparently strong adherents to the Islamic faith and were each motivated by a particular religious, political or ideological cause, that being the pursuit of violent jihad," Mr Maidment said.

"In essence that meant that the accused were motivated to carry out violent activities against members of the Australian community as a whole, in pursuit of their ideals."

Mr Maidment said the men obtained large quantities of firearms and ammunition between July 2004 and November 2005, as well as significant amounts of chemicals such as acetone and hydrogen peroxide.

They also had detailed written instructions on how to manufacture explosives "capable of causing substantial damage and loss of life", he said.

Justice Anthony Whealy emphasised the men's presumption of innocence and said the jury should not draw any bias, adverse or otherwise, from their Islamic beliefs.

"It is important to repeat and stress that those who wish to serve on the jury should offer themselves for service only if they are able to bring an unbiased approach to persons of the Muslim faith.

"Similarly, if you are of the Muslim faith and harbour resentment to non-Muslims, you should not offer yourself for service."

Justice Whealy advised anyone who felt uncomfortable about viewing "disturbing images" of dead and badly injured persons, including children, should ask to be excused.

Anyone who felt they would not be able to keep confidential and national security matters a secret should also ask for exemption, he said.

Justice Whealy said the trial was expected to run for up to a year, with up to 700 witnesses, with brief breaks over Christmas and Easter.

Five thousand potential jurors have been summonsed, and the selection process is expected to take the rest of the week.

The final 15 will be selected on Friday from a short-list of 300 by a process of ballot.

Up to four challenges will then be allowed from each of the 24 barristers briefed in the case, which includes a QC and five senior counsel.

It is the first Supreme Court trial to be held at the new Sydney West Trial Courts complex at Parramatta.

Both Justice Whealy and Mr Maidment addressed the jury assembly room via videolink from the courtroom, two floors above.

The two-week crown opening is expected to begin next Wednesday, November 5

[Al-Qaeda propaganda chief killed in Pakistan strike](#)

Channel NewsAsia – November 1

An Egyptian Al-Qaeda operative -- described by the United States as the terror network's propaganda chief -- was killed in a missile strike in Pakistan, security officials said on Saturday.

Abu Jihad al-Masri was among several rebels killed when two missiles fired by a suspected US spy drone hit a truck in the North Waziristan tribal region bordering Afghanistan on Friday night, they said.

The United States has offered a one-million-dollar bounty for the death or capture of al-Masri, who has appeared in an anti-Western video introduced by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's number two.

"The strike was aimed at a vehicle carrying Abu Jihad and two others. The target was successfully hit and all three people were killed," a senior Pakistani security official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

His death came in one of two separate missile attacks in Pakistan's troubled tribal belt on Friday, the latest in a series of 18 strikes in the past three months that have raised tensions between Washington and Islamabad.

The attacks also come just days before the US presidential election, in which the "war on terror" in Afghanistan and, increasingly, Pakistan has been a key foreign policy issue.

There was no immediate confirmation from the Pakistani military or from US forces deployed in Afghanistan about al-Masri's death.

The US State Department's Rewards for Justice website said that the balding al-Masri "is in charge of Al-Qaeda media and propaganda. He may also be the chief of external operations for Al-Qaeda".

It said he was believed to operate out of Iran, but Pakistani officials said he was

known to have moved to the Pakistani tribal belt in 2005 or 2006. It said he also went by the alias Mohammad Hasan Khalil al-Hakim.

In 2006, al-Masri appeared in a video introduced by his fellow countryman Zawahiri, in which al-Masri said that his own Islamic group, Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya, had joined forces with Al-Qaeda.

The video was released by As Sahab, Al-Qaeda's media arm.

Later that year al-Masri issued a website statement calling Pope Benedict XVI a "spiteful crusader" after the pontiff made remarks on Islam and violence, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, a US organisation that monitors Islamist websites.

Militant sources in Pakistan said al-Masri was primarily involved in "ideology" and not so much with Al-Qaeda's operational side.

A former member of Islamic Jihad, Kamal Habib, told AFP in Cairo that al-Masri used to belong to the same Islamist group that assassinated Egyptian president Anwar Sadat in 1981, leading a cell in the southern Aswan province.

"He was a second generation leader, not from the generation involved in killing Sadat," he said.

Al-Masri "was a Gamaat Islamiya leader in Aswan, and left in the 1980s for Afghanistan where he adopted Al-Qaeda's views," he said, adding that he opposed moves by leaders of the militant group jailed in Egypt to renounce violence.

The last Al-Qaeda figure on the State Department list to be killed in a missile strike was chemical weapons expert Midhat Mursi al-Sayid Umar, who died in July in the South Waziristan tribal region.

South Waziristan was the scene of the second of Friday's strikes.

Hours after the one that killed al-Masri, missiles targetted a tribesman's house outside Wana, the main town in South Waziristan, killing 12 militants and injuring 30 others.

Among those wounded was Mullah Nazir, a top Pakistani Taliban commander accused of engineering attacks on international forces deployed in Afghanistan, officials said.

Security officials said that Abu Akash, an Arab Al-Qaeda militant reported to have been killed in the first missile attack, now appeared to have escaped.

[Q&A: Will terrorists go nuclear?](#)

Middle East Times – November 4

WASHINGTON, Oct. 30 (UPI) -- Has al-Qaida become the world's first terrorist nuclear power? An interview with Brian Michael Jenkins of the RAND Corp. think tank.

Q: CIA Director Michael Hayden said recently that al-Qaida was one of the agency's top nuclear concerns. Is al-Qaida a bigger threat than North Korea or Iran?

A: The CIA director based his assessment on intentions rather than capabilities. North Korea has nuclear weapons. Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions are backed up by a large contingent of nuclear scientists and an extensive network of nuclear facilities. The CIA, however, considers al-Qaida the bigger threat because it assumes that if al-Qaida had nuclear weapons, it would be most likely to use them.

Q: What are al-Qaida's nuclear capabilities?

A: Al-Qaida has nuclear ambitions. Osama bin Laden tried to acquire nuclear material when he was still in Sudan, and he spoke with two nuclear scientists from Pakistan shortly before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Documents later discovered in al-Qaida training camps in Afghanistan indicate interest in nuclear weapons. But insofar as we know, al-Qaida has not acquired nuclear weapons or fissile material necessary to build them. And the captured documents do not indicate that al-Qaida knows how to make a nuclear bomb.

Q: That was seven years ago. What do we know about developments since then?

A: Probably not enough. It is, however, interesting to note that even as al-Qaida's operational capabilities were being degraded by the combined action of intelligence services and law enforcement organizations around the world, its so-called media jihad was increasing in volume and sophistication. Themes of mass destruction play a significant role in its communications. Al-Qaida appears to have discovered that by claims, threats and broadcasting religious rulings granting it the "right" to kill millions of infidels, it can excite its followers, who embellish its nuclear fantasies, and create nuclear terror among its foes. Al-Qaida has become the world's first terrorist nuclear power without demonstrating possession of a single nuclear weapon.

Q: In your new book, "Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?," you make a distinction between "nuclear terrorism" and "nuclear terror." What is the difference?

A: Nuclear terrorism is about the frightening possibility that terrorists will acquire and use nuclear weapons. Nuclear terror is about the anticipation of that event. Nuclear terrorism is about intelligence, evidence, assessments of terrorists' capabilities. Nuclear terror is about our imagination. The history of nuclear terrorism can be briefly summarized. There hasn't been any -- many would hasten to add "yet." Nuclear terror has a rich history and is deeply embedded in our popular culture and policymaking circles.

Q: How likely is nuclear terrorism?

A: The experts don't agree. Their guesses range from one in a million to a virtual certainty -- "not if but when," to use the famous phrase. American estimates of the probability run significantly higher than the estimates of European respondents. Of course, none of the estimates have any predictive value. They are a reflection of perceptions, of worries, of nuclear terror.

Q: Having written the book, what is your own estimate?

A: This requires prophecy, for which I'm not qualified. The debate itself has a theological quality, with disbelievers on one side vs. the "Apocalypticists" on the other. In this debate I regard myself as a prudent agnostic. Although I don't think nuclear terrorism is inevitable, and there are no indications that it is imminent, what we do know is still grim enough. We have to take the threat seriously. Nuclear terrorism is a threat we are going to have to live with for a long time.

[Terrorists try to infiltrate UK's top labs](#)

Guardian – November 2

Dozens of suspected terrorists have attempted to infiltrate Britain's top laboratories in order to develop weapons of mass destruction, such as biological and nuclear devices, during the past year.

The [security services](#), MI5 and MI6, have intercepted up to 100 potential terrorists posing as postgraduate students who they believe tried accessing laboratories to gain the materials and expertise needed to create chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons, the government has confirmed.

It follows warnings from MI5 to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that [al-Qaeda](#)'s terror network is actively seeking to recruit scientists and university students with access to laboratories containing deadly viruses and weapons technology.

Extensive background checks from the security services, using a new vetting scheme, have led to the rejection of overseas students who were believed to be intent on developing weapons of mass destruction. A Foreign Office spokesman said the students had been denied clearance to study in the UK under powers 'to

stop the spread of knowledge and skills that could be used in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery'.

He added: 'There is empirical evidence of a problem with postgraduate students becoming weapons proliferators.' The overseas students, a number of whom are thought to be from 'countries of concern' such as Iran and Pakistan, were intercepted under the Academic Technology Approval Scheme, introduced by universities and the security services last November.

The findings raise questions over how many terrorist suspects may have already infiltrated the UK's laboratory network. Rihab Taha, dubbed 'Dr Germ', who worked on Saddam Hussein's biological weapons programme, studied for her PhD in plant toxins at East Anglia University's School of Biological Sciences in Norwich.

In addition, a number of well-educated Iraqi scientists - funded by Baghdad - infiltrated several British microbiology laboratories in the run-up to the Gulf war of 1990-91. Britain has about 800 laboratories in hospitals, universities and private firms where staff have access to lethal viruses such as Ebola, polio and avian flu or could acquire the technology and expertise to develop deadly weapons. Whitehall sources remain concerned about the number of countries intent on acquiring the materials and knowledge to develop a nuclear or biological warfare capability.

John Wood of the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control said: 'Any scientist would say it's important that we know who is working in our laboratories, and also why they are working there.'

The trial of two NHS doctors, Mohammad Asha, 27, a Jordanian national, and Bilal Abdulla, 29, from Iraq, who allegedly plotted widespread carnage through car bomb attacks in London's West End and Glasgow airport last year, has intensified scrutiny on the radicalisation of students. Named in the plot is 27-year-old Indian PhD student, Kafeel Ahmed, who drove a Jeep laden with gas canisters into Glasgow Airport's main terminal building but died several weeks later from severe burns. Ahmed studied for his PhD in the technology department of Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge.

A spokesman for Universities UK, which represents vice-chancellors, said the security scheme had so far proved effective. He added: 'It is important to protect the UK from people who may wish to use technology and materials here inappropriately.'

Michael Stephens, head of security at the Medical Research Council, which runs some of Britain's most sensitive laboratories, said they took the issue of biosecurity 'extremely seriously'.

Concern that al-Qaeda is intent on developing a more sophisticated weapons capability moved the former director-general of MI5, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, to warn publicly that terror attacks in Britain could involve weapons of mass destruction. She said: 'We know that attempts to gather materials are there, we know that attempts to gather technologies are there.'

Extremist groups are known to have targeted students, offering to fund courses in return for using their newly acquired expertise. It is unclear if any of those denied 'clearance' to study in the UK during the past year were funded by grants from host governments such as Tehran.

A Foreign Office spokesman said 'efforts' on scrutiny of foreign postgraduate students would continue with only a few of the 20,000 applications rejected for security reasons. In the US, draft legislation advocates banning all non-Americans from laboratories which possess potentially dangerous bacteria and viruses, a measure the UK government believes is too draconian.

Professor George Griffin, chairman of the advisory committee on dangerous pathogens, has warned of the lack of a national standard required for people to work in high-security laboratories.

The move comes as the government considers plans to build a new pathogen research facility in central London, between King's Cross station and the British Library. Experts have warned that a terror attack would prove catastrophic to the surrounding area.

DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

[Russia says U.S. sanctions will hit ties](#)

International Herald Tribune –October 24

Russia accused Washington on Friday of breaking international law and weakening cooperation on Iran's nuclear program after it imposed sanctions on companies accused of passing sensitive technology to Tehran.

A U.S. State Department spokesman said the United States had imposed sanctions on firms in China, Russia, Sudan, Venezuela, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates for alleged sales of sensitive technology that could help Iran, North Korea and Syria develop weapons of mass destruction or missile systems.

Spokesman Gordon Duguid said he could not give specific details of the companies' activities because of "intelligence sensitivities."

One of the firms on the list was Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport.

"These new sanctions were introduced without any international legal foundation whatsoever," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"Russia will of course take this into account in practical affairs and relations with the United States such as in trade and economic and other spheres."

Lavrov, speaking at a news briefing after talks with Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, said the U.S. measures would not make Russia change its policies on Iran.

"All our trade and all of our military-technical cooperation with Iran is carried out in strict accordance with current international legal norms," Lavrov said.

"There can be no other explanation here than the rather arrogant extra-territorial implementation of American laws."

Western states suspect Iran of trying to develop a nuclear bomb. Tehran denies this, saying its nuclear program is for civilian purposes only.

Russia has given limited backing to U.N. sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, but says there is no evidence Iran is seeking nuclear weapons.

A Russian foreign ministry statement later said the sanctions had damaged the United States' position in the group of six countries -- Russia, Britain, the United States, China, France and Germany -- involved in talks with Iran over its nuclear program.

"It is clear that such actions undermine cooperation within the framework of the 'Six'," the statement said.

"It's time for the United States to decide if it is ready to continue cooperation within the 'Six' on the basis of the agreed approaches."

UNSCRUPULOUS COMPETITION

Duguid said the sanctions took effect on August 12. They were published in the U.S. Federal Register <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/> (page 63226) on October 22.

Under the sanctions, which will remain in effect until September 2010, no U.S. government agency may enter into any agreement with the organizations named.

Sanctions were imposed on 13 organizations, including China Xinshidai Company, China Shipbuilding and Offshore International Corporation, Huazhong CNC as well as Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport and the Venezuelan Military Industries Company.

"There was credible information indicating they had transferred to or acquired from Iran, North Korea, or Syria goods, services, or technology listed on multilateral export control lists and certain other items that could make a material contribution to WMD or cruise or ballistic missile systems," Duguid said.

The United States imposed sanctions in 2006 on Rosoboronexport, now a unit of Russian industrial group Russian Technologies, provoking sharp criticism from Moscow.

Russian Technologies is headed by Sergei Chemezov, a close ally of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Russian Technologies also has stakes in AvtoVAZ, Russia's top car maker, and VSMPO-Avisma, the world's largest titanium producer.

A spokesman for Rosoboronexport said on Russian television the State Department's measures were "a case of unscrupulous competition," by the United States and that the firm worked in line with all international agreements on arms control.

[USAF Unveils Global Strike Command](#)

Defense News – October 25

It's official. The long-awaited Global Strike Command charged with taking over the U.S. Air Force's nuclear mission has been unveiled.

Air Force leaders have completed the Nuclear Roadmap, which includes the standup of Global Strike Command and the ensuing organizational shake-up, the largest since Strategic Air Command disbanded in the early 1990s.

Eighth Air Force and 20th Air Force will fall under Global Strike Command, bringing the Air Force's intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear-capable bombers - the B-52s and B-2s - under one command for the first time since SAC.

The 8th Air Force will be stripped of all responsibilities except its bombers before the switch. The cyber mission will fall to the 24th Air Force the service will stand up in place of the previous plans to create a Cyber Command.

Officials hope to stand up the new command by September 2009, said Maj. Gen. C. Donald Alston, director of the Air Force's Nuclear Task Force.

"We are going to begin the deliberate planning process to see if we can achieve that timeline. That's very aggressive. This is the nuclear business, so it's going to take as long as it needs to take," he said.

The Nuclear Roadmap was released 13 months after the first of two nuclear incidents embarrassed the Air Force and eventually cost former Air Force Chief

of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley and Air Force Secretary Michael W. Wynne their jobs.

Alston and his task force have been working on the road map since the winter to lay out the Air Force's way ahead to re-establish its credibility handling the nation's nuclear stockpile.

"Over this past year, our pride's been hurt by what we have exposed as a bona fide weakness in our nuclear enterprise. It hurt our pride because we are so committed, and we have pride in what we do," Alston said.

Airmen at three ICBM wings - 90th Missile Wing at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo.; 91st Missile Wing at Minot Air Force Base, N.D.; and 341st Missile Wing at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont. - and three bomber wings - 5th Bomb Wing at Minot; 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.; and 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo. - will wear the Global Strike Command patch next year.

However, airmen assigned to those wings will not notice much change, as the forces will remain at their bases and operations will continue as planned, Alston said.

"But, what [airmen] get out of this is leadership at all levels within that command that are focused on the nuclear mission in a way that has proven to be a challenge for our Air Force," he said. "The priorities will be the nuclear mission."

Similar to an initiative Air Combat Command started, Global Strike Command will set aside a squadron of B-52s focused solely on the nuclear mission, with the others filling conventional bombing tasks.

"Have that kind of intensity and that kind of focus for a defined period of time, [and] we see a great benefit," Alston said.

Alston said the Air Force considered transferring the B-1 Lancers to the new command, as the Task Force for Nuclear Weapons Management suggested, but ultimately chose to keep them in the 12th Air Force because the aircraft no longer is slotted to carry nuclear weapons.

The command will be led by a three-star general who will oversee the selection process of the headquarters location.

Three Louisiana congressmen have lobbied for Global Strike Command to come to Barksdale after Air Force leaders balked on plans to stand up a separate Cyber Command that Louisiana politicians hoped would be established there.

Hans Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, said he expects the headquarters to be stationed at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., alongside U.S. Strategic Command.

NUCLEAR CAREERS

Right now, the Air Force has a shortage of nuclear airmen "with the right skills in the right jobs," Alston said.

To fix that, the Air Force will have to enhance its training, education and force development within nuclear career specialties.

"We will rebuild our expertise through Air Force-wide training, education and career force development initiatives designed to ensure that we create a basic atmosphere of understanding for our nuclear stewardship responsibilities," according to the road map's Executive Summary.

To begin, a Nuclear Enterprise Advisory Panel will be created and tasked to ensure nuclear airmen get the right training and nuclear units are staffed correctly, Alston said.

The panel will be part of the Force Development Management Council chaired by the Air Force vice chief of staff that oversees manning decisions.

"This will give us a cross-cutting view of our enlisted, civilian and officer force for nuclear issues to make sure we are having the right training, right education and right assignment at the right time," Alston said.

Inspections

Internal and external reports faulted the Air Force's nuclear inspection process to allow its nuclear problems to go unchecked, including the Defense Department task force led by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger.

"Deficiencies in inspection processes also contributed to the erosion of the culture of accountability and rigorous self-assessment associated with high standards of excellence," according to the road map's Executive Summary.

The Nuclear Roadmap outlines sweeping changes for this inspection process, tasking the Air Force Inspector General to play a larger role, as opposed to major command's IG units.

The Air Force IG will build a training program that inspectors will have to pass before they handle nuclear inspections, Alston said.

A core team will be put together within the Air Force Inspection Agency bolstered by airmen with extensive nuclear expertise that will deploy to nuclear units for nuclear surety inspections.

"In order to fortify the proficiency of [major command IG teams], this core team of inspectors will deploy to support that IG team and be enhanced by a team that goes on all NSIs," Alston said.

Global Strike Command won't stand alone with the Air Force's nuclear mission.

The Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center under Air Force Material Command will oversee the sustainment of the service's portion of the nuclear stockpile, according to the Nuclear Roadmap.

"The Air Force must invest in the nuclear deterrence mission and have a clear, long-term commitment to sustain, modernize and recapitalize its nuclear capability," read the road map's Executive Summary.

[The Russian Hangover](#)

National Interests – October 28

Two months ago, the United States and Europe were jolted by a revived Russia. Flush with energy money, Moscow announced that it was back as a world power. Georgia was defeated, Ukraine was fearful, the Eastern Europeans were nervous, and the United States and Western Europeans argued over what to do. Was a new cold war imminent? They needn't have worried.

Even then it was obvious that Russia's offensive power was limited. Its conventional forces have improved over their nadir following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but the Russian military remains no match for that of the United States and only at great cost could Moscow defeat a state with reasonably modern armed forces. Jane's Strategic Advisory Services recently pointed to weaknesses exposed by the August war, concluding: "Improvements in command, training levels and the employment of flexible, modern weapons systems are required before the Russian military can face any opponents larger or better equipped than the Georgian military."

Moscow's nuclear force, including a substantial number of tactical warheads, is its principal power tool. However, Russia could ill afford to use nuclear weapons as a substitute for inadequate conventional forces against any of the countries lining its border. Rather, Moscow has a deterrent that would turn any Western response into a dangerous game of geopolitical chicken. Yet relying on nuclear weapons to counter conventional intervention by other nations would be as dangerous for Moscow as for the United States or European states.

Moreover, despite the nationalistic adrenaline rush following Moscow's triumph, Russia's long-term prospects remain bleak. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has suffered not just a birth dearth, but a sharp rise in mortality rates and drop in life expectancy, what Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute calls a "great leap backwards." Russia's population was 145 million in 2002, but fell to 142 million this year. The United Nations figures that Russia's population is going to drop another 10 million by 2020.

Obviously, demographic and health trends can change, but Moscow's problems are systematic and fundamental. Any turnaround likely will take years. As Eberstadt puts it, "this is not the portrait of a successfully and rapidly developing economy—much less an emerging economic superpower." A declining population will have serious geopolitical consequences as well. For instance, the relative depopulation of Siberia, adjoining far more populous China, could leave Russia's expansive eastern territory at risk.

But we need not wait until 2020 for evidence of Russian weakness. Economic uncertainty and falling energy prices have combined to deflate Russia's pretensions of being a great power again. The stock market is down 70 percent from May, with one-time billionaire oligarchs scurrying to the Kremlin begging for relief. The ruble has lost two year's worth of appreciation as anxious citizens, so recently celebrating their new prosperity, change their savings into dollars and euros. Heretofore abundant foreign-exchange reserves have dissipated as oil prices have fallen by more than half and the government has attempted to prop up the ruble. Investment-rating services are threatening to downgrade Russian debt.

As its economy weakens, Russia is less able to threaten its neighbors and the West—by cutting off energy shipments, for instance—should its demands not be met. Moreover, declining revenues will crimp the Kremlin's plans to sharply enhance its military. Not only will there be less money available overall, but more funds will have to be plowed into business investment and social programs. Economic growth has been the foundation of Vladimir Putin's popularity. He will be loath to risk popular displeasure by allowing the economy to continue sinking.

Indeed, Russia's present financial difficulties are likely to force Moscow to accelerate economic integration with the West, which will force the Kremlin to moderate its foreign policy. Last year, then—President Putin issued an updated economic development strategy for 2020, which envisioned Russia as sporting one of the globe's five-largest economies and acting as an international financial center and technological leader. Those are challenging goals under any circumstances, but almost certainly will be impossible to achieve without abundant Western investment, trade and cooperation

The image of a new Russian colossus threatening neighbors, Western Europe and the United States never reflected reality. Moscow's ambitions always were

much more limited—ensuring border security and international respect, not reestablishing the Soviet empire. So, too, were its abilities limited, even before the ongoing economic crunch.

The incoming U.S. administration should use the present economic uncertainty as an opportunity to refashion relations with Russia. Neither country can afford to finance a further arms buildup or has anything at stake in countries like Georgia and Ukraine that warrants a potential nuclear confrontation, and both nations would benefit greatly from expanded economic and security cooperation in the future. A *modus vivendi* should be possible—as long as Washington recognizes that diplomacy requires giving as well as taking, especially when the other party has a nuclear arsenal to back up its positions.

[Burmese FM visits North Korea for first time in 25 years](#)

Mizzima – October 28

New Delhi - Burma's Foreign Minister Nyan Win's historic visit to North Korea indicates that the isolated Southeast Asian nation is on the look-out for friendly nations, that share similar ideologies, an analyst said.

Nyan Win arrived at the North Korean capital of Pyongyang on Monday and was greeted by his counterpart Pak Ui Chun. The two foreign ministers met and held talks at the Mansudae Assembly Hall, the state-run Korean Central News Agency said in a brief dispatch. The KCNA, however, did not provide any further details on the visit of the Burmese foreign minister.

Nyan Win is the first Burmese Foreign Minister to set foot in Pyongyang in 25 years after the two countries severed diplomatic relations in 1983. Aung Naing Oo, a Burmese analyst based in Thailand, said the visit marks a historic turn for the two countries and indicated that the isolated Burmese generals were seeking friends, who share similar ideology.

"The visit [by Nyan Win] is natural, but it indicates a tendency of countries that share similar ideologies are getting closer," Aung Naing Oo said.

While the budding relationship between the two countries may result in trade resumption as well as supply of even arms and nuclear technologies, Aung Naing Oo said it does not carry much of a threat. "It is like the old saying – 'Birds of the same feather flock together'," he said.

Burma and North Korea severed their relationship in 1983, following a bombing in Rangoon by North Korean secret agents targeting visiting South Korea's then-President Chun Doe Hwan. He was unhurt, but 21 people were killed, including four South Korean Cabinet ministers.

The two countries, however, agreed to resume diplomatic ties in April 2007.

Burma, which faces an arms embargo by the United States and European Union countries, also reportedly has bought weapons from North Korea.

Officials from the two countries have made some diplomatic visits since ties were restored. Burma's Sports Minister, Brig. Gen. Thura Aye Myint, recently travelled to North Korea. A delegation led by senior military officers also visited North Korea earlier this year.

[PRC is changing military balance](#)

Taipei Times – October 29

In recent years there has been a rapid rise in China's military and economic development, with growing global influence. Much uncertainty surrounds China's future course, in particular in the area of expanding military power and how that power may be used. This has significant implications for Australia, our region and the world. China has long-term goals, joining economic growth to military power. The Japanese slogan meaning "rich country, strong arms" was transformed into China's 16-character policy, which states: "Combine the military and the civil; combine peace and war; give priority to military products; let the civil support the military."

China's peaceful rise and its economic development attract widespread acclaim around the world. Unfashionable as it may be, however, I want to focus on its rapid and non-transparent growth in military power. China is transforming its forces into a full-spectrum military capable of military operations and remote power projection. It has recently acquired advanced foreign weapons and it has continued high rates of investment in its domestic, defense and science technology industries, as well as making substantial organizational and doctrinal reforms to its armed forces.

This expansion, as well as improving its military capability, is changing the military balance in East Asia. The improvement of China's strategic capabilities has implications for Australia, East Asia and beyond the Asia-Pacific region. Only recently, the construction of a vast new naval base has become known via commercial satellite imagery. The opening of the Sanya base will enable China's new type 094 ballistic missile submarines to find a safe 5,000m deep operating area south of Hainan Island.

The apparent strategic purpose of this base is to protect these nuclear submarines and to defend China's growing interest in securing sea lanes to critical resources in distant areas like Africa, the Persian Gulf and Australia.

In the May issue of Jane's Intelligence Review, Richard Fisher says Sanya can be expected to host future Chinese aircraft carrier battle groups, given the size of its piers. The size of the openings of the piers and tunnels that the submarines go into gives it the capacity to host eight nuclear submarines. This has been

detected by commercially available satellite imagery.

According to the Wall Street Journal Asia, in mid-November last year, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) held major naval and air exercises south of Hainan Island. In conjunction with this exercise, or soon after, the first type 094 nuclear submarine moved into Sanya.

China has the most active ballistic missile program in the world. It continues to develop and test offensive missiles and upgrade missile systems. It has deployed an increasing number of short-range ballistic and cruise missiles opposite Taiwan. In addition, China is modernizing its long-range ballistic missile force and it is in the process of developing a new submarine-launched ballistic missile. China is modernizing its nuclear force, presently fielding the new DF 31 and DF 31A intercontinental range missiles, which has increased its strategic strike force capabilities.

From the point of view of strategic stability in our part of the world, it is of concern that China is developing advanced cruise missiles and anti-ship missiles designed to strike ships including aircraft carriers from great distances. Moreover, in January last year, without warning the international community, China successfully tested a direct ascent anti-satellite weapon, destroying a defunct Chinese weather satellite.

This unannounced test raised concerns internationally and demonstrated China's ability to attack satellites as well as posing a danger to space flights. In addition, in November last year, China successfully launched its first lunar orbiter. Together they demonstrate China's ability to conduct complicated space maneuvers that have far-reaching military implications.

Moreover, China is increasing its army and ground forces as well and equipping them with modern tanks, APCs and artillery. According to the Pentagon's assessment and analysis "Chinese Military Power," its ongoing military reforms and modernization emphasize the need for highly qualified officers and soldiers trained in modern and key technologies.

This military modernization emphasizes the need to equip them with new and high-tech weaponry, making them capable of advanced military operations as well as directing and participating in what is called "informatized warfare."

In addition, the PLA emphasizes the role of modern information technology as a force multiplier to enable their forces to conduct military operations with precision at ever greater distances from China. Because of the modern battlefield and the need for high technology and equipment, which it does not have itself, many governments say, China is running an aggressive effort to acquire advanced technologies, particularly from the US. Investigations have revealed there has been considerable illicit export of US arms and technologies to China. Last year,

many computer networks around the world, including US information systems, were intruded upon, and they appeared to be targeted from the PRC. This is of great concern to many governments around the world.

Continuous and steady economic growth is the basis of China's future development. As China emerges as a regional and global power, its continued economic development remains the foundation of the power of the Chinese Communist Party and leads it to further military expansion and modernization because of the prestige it gives the party in nationalistic sentiment within China.

According to Mark Helprin in a speech given to the Hoover Institution, a country with restrained population increases and a high rate of economic expansion can over time dramatically improve its material lot while simultaneously elevating military spending almost beyond belief. The crux is to raise per capita income significantly enough that diversions for defense will go virtually unnoticed. China's average annual growth of roughly 9 percent over the past 20 years has led to an absolute 10-fold increase in per-capita GNP and a 21-fold increase in purchasing power parity of its military expenditure.

As far as China's nuclear forces are concerned, the Chinese leadership and the Chinese defense paper of 2006 reiterate their commitment to a declaratory policy of no first use. The main purpose of its nuclear force is to deter other countries from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against China.

However, doctrinal material suggests additional purposes for its forces, like deterring conventional attacks against nuclear assets or conventional attacks with weapons of mass destruction, in order to reinforce China's great power status.

Last year, Beijing announced an astonishing 19.47 percent increase on the previous year's military budget to approximately US\$45.9 billion, which surpasses the growth of its overall economy.

Moreover, its defense budget does not include other large categories of expenditure, such as the expenses for strategic forces, foreign acquisitions, military related research and development and paramilitary forces. Therefore, the actual military expenditure of China is hard to estimate because of its lack of transparency.

Even though its actual military expenditure is not apparent, it is certain internationally that China significantly under-reports its military spending. The US Department of Defense estimates China's military spending last year was between US\$97 billion and US\$139 billion. The US and other nations continue to urge China to increase the transparency of its military expenditure.

US nuclear reductions and China's acquisition of ballistic-missile submarines,

multiple warhead mobile missiles and modern Soviet air fighters (the SU series), the expansion of the Sanya base and the increase in China's ballistic missile preparations and its mobile nuclear missiles will eventually lead to the two countries becoming level in strategic nuclear weapons. Moreover, US military force reductions are not only nuclear but conventional as well. As the world is occupied with wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, this shift in the Pacific, identified by Helprin and others, goes largely unnoticed.

Australians welcome China's peaceful rise and we all want good relations with the People's Republic of China. We want Australia and East Asia to continue to have good economic relations with China and to benefit from its economic development. But we have to note these fundamental shifts in strategic power that are taking place in our region.

The now obvious sensitivity of the operation of this base in Sanya was emphasized to us a few years ago by the apparently overboard decision of the Chinese military to impound a US reconnaissance aircraft on Hainan island. It was obviously because of the Chinese preparations for this vast submarine and naval base, which, as Fisher argues, will have piers that can host potentially future Chinese nuclear powered aircraft carriers.

These projections of power that are far beyond the coast of China are something that countries like Australia and all the countries in the Pacific have to note. We have to view Chinese growth with equanimity but we should at the same time note its exponential military growth, prepare for it and understand it. Above all, we should not ignore this Chinese growth in military power.

[Burma, China Consolidating Military Relations](#)

The Irrawaddy – October 29

Signs are evident that Burma and China are stepping up military cooperation after Burma's top three generals met with Gen Zhang Li, the vice chief-of-staff of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA), on Monday in Naypyidaw.

Snr-Gen Than Shwe, who frequently snubs visiting UN envoys, reportedly offered a warm welcome to the visiting Chinese delegation. Vice Snr-Gen Maung Aye and Gen Thura Shwe Mann also attended the meeting. Thura Shwe Mann later held separate talks with the Chinese general, according to China's state-run *Xinhua News Agency* on Monday.

Xinhua did not provide details of the meeting, but said that Zhang Li had discussions with Thura Shwe Mann, the chief of general staff of the Burmese army, navy and air force. The Chinese news agency also commented on the spirit of "friendly cooperation" between the armed forces of the two countries.

Htay Aung, a Burmese researcher in Thailand, said that Gen Zhang Li's trip to Burma was a means of strengthening cooperation between the two armed forces.

China has been the major supplier of military hardware to Burma since the regime crushed a pro-democracy uprising in 1988. China has provided fighter jet planes, naval ships, tanks, military vehicles and ammunition to the Burmese junta. It has been reported that China has delivered some US \$2 billion worth of military equipment to Burma since the early 1990s.

Speaking to *The Irrawaddy*, Aung Kyaw Zaw, a Burmese analyst living at the China-Burma border, said he believed that the generals' meeting focused on the military industry.

"The Chinese armed forces have helped and supported the Burmese with heavy military hardware for years," he said, adding that 90 percent of Burmese military transportation is supplied by China.

New York-based Human Rights Watch pointed out in its October 2007 report that India, China, Russia, and other nations have supplied Burma with weapons that the Burmese army uses to commit human rights abuses against civilians and to bolster its ability to maintain power.

The international rights group said that China has supplied Burma with advanced helicopter gunships, arms production technology, support equipment and small arms, including mortars, landmines, and assault rifles, as well as assistance in setting up an indigenous small-arms production capability. It said China had also supplied a vast array of advanced military hardware to Burma, including fighter planes, naval vessels and tanks, and other infantry support weapons.

In August, Burma's Chief of Defense Industry Lt-Gen Tin Aye visited China. State-run *Xinhua* reported that he met with Gen Liang Guanglie, a member of the central military commission and chief of general staff of the PLA, in an effort to increase cooperation in political, economic, cultural and military spheres.

According to *Xinhua*, the Chinese defense ministry was ready to work with Burma to further expand bilateral cooperation, so as to help the two nations' defense and to safeguard regional peace and stability.

According to a report leaked to *The Irrawaddy*, in July, at a confidential meeting with senior staffers, Home Affairs minister Maj-Gen Maung Oo said that Burma was not pro-China. However, Maung Oo stated that Burma was China's "road to the sea of southern states" because allies of the US, such as Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations were encircling China.

In 1989, Than Shwe, then deputy commander in chief of the armed forces, led the first high-level visit to China to purchase military hardware.

[Cambodia doubles military budget after Thai clash](#)

Reuters – October 29

Impoverished Cambodia has doubled its 2009 military budget to \$500 million (311 million pounds) following this month's border clash with Thailand, officials said on Wednesday, an increase that is likely to anger its donors.

The National Assembly is expected to approve the new budget next week, with the military accounting for 25 percent of all spending, said Cheam Yeap, head of its finance commission.

"This incident has awoken us to the need for our soldiers to be better equipped. We cannot sit and watch Thai troops encroach on our border," he told Reuters. "Our army needs to be more organised, better trained, with newer bases and well-fed troops."

Three Cambodian soldiers and one Thai died in the October 15 firefight in the shadow of the 900-year-old Preah Vihear temple, a stunning set of Hindu ruins that have been claimed for decades by both countries.

At roughly 100,000 men, Cambodia's armed forces are a third the size of Thailand's, but remain very large for one of Asia's poorest nations.

For years, international donors have been trying to get Phnom Penh to demobilise thousands of ageing soldiers, many of them former Khmer Rouge guerrillas, to free up more cash for investment in health and education.

In the two weeks since the clash, local army units say they have recruited 3,000 men despite Prime Minister Hun Sen saying he wants a negotiated settlement with Bangkok to disputed stretches of border.

[China, Russia Issue Joint Communiqué On Co-Op](#)

Xinhua – October 29

China and Russia issued a joint communique here Tuesday, pledging further efforts to strengthen strategic coordination and deepen cooperation in various fields.

The communique was signed by visiting Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin at the 13th regular prime ministers' talks between the two countries.

During his visit, Wen also held separate talks with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Speaker of the Russian Federation Council Sergei Mironov, and attended the third China-Russia Economic and Trade Summit Forum.

During his meeting with Medvedev, Wen and the Russian president had an in-depth exchange of views on the two countries' strategic coordination and cooperation, as well as major regional and international issues.

The two leaders said that the Sino-Russian strategic partnership of cooperation has witnessed rapid growth in recent years, with enhanced mutual trust and support and broadened cooperation in key areas.

The two sides agreed that it is important and urgent for China and Russia to comprehensively strengthen bilateral relations in the current complicated international situation.

In line with the spirits and principle of the treaty of good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation, China and Russia will implement all agreements and consensus reached by the two sides, promote mutual political trust, facilitate pragmatic cooperation and deepen strategic coordination, so as to benefit the two countries and peoples and make greater contributions to world peace and stability.

Wen and Putin noted that the prime ministers' regular talks have played a significant role in boosting pragmatic bilateral cooperation in various fields, saying both countries are willing to continue to better the mechanism and improve its efficiency.

The two sides will make all events of the "national theme year" of China and Russia approved by the two heads of state a regular occurrence, implement the plan for the year of Russian language in 2009 in China, and make preparations for the year of Chinese language in 2010 in Russia.

The two countries will make joint efforts to further expand trade and economic cooperation, so as to promote their economic development.

Both sides should give full play to the role of the China-Russia Chamber of Commerce of Machinery and Electronic Products, and take practical measures to increase high-tech products in bilateral trade.

The two sides will, in the principle of equality and mutual benefit, make use of the Sino-Russian investment promotion conference and take measures so as to sign a draft plan of China-Russia investment cooperation at an early date, to create a sound investment environment, effectively protect the legal rights and interests of investors, implement investment projects of mutual interests, and expand cooperation in industrial projects, infrastructure construction and renovation.

They will continue to step up regional cooperation along the border, to further regulate the cross-border trade order, improve the structure of commodities, and upgrading the infrastructure in port cities.

The two sides reaffirmed that energy cooperation is an important part of the China-Russia strategic partnership of cooperation, and the two nations should deepen energy cooperation on the basis of mutual benefit.

Both sides agreed to support cooperation in oil and gas, including long-term trade of crude oil, the construction of oil pipelines linking Russia and China, the upstream and downstream cooperation in oil fields, natural gas supply and the establishment of natural gas processing and chemical enterprises.

The two sides also agreed to widen and deepen long-term cooperation in space technology to ensure the completion of the 2007-2009 space cooperation program as scheduled.

In the fields of science and technology, China and Russia, by combining their efforts in high priority fields of scientific research, will implement joint projects with great innovative potential and commercial prospects. The two sides will further promote cooperation in nanotechnology, energy, energy saving, ecology and rational utilization of natural resources.

The two sides also agreed to push forward cooperation in transportation and traffic infrastructure, enhance cooperation in such areas as trade and project financing, bank card and export credit insurance, and to further cooperation in the civil aviation sector.

They spoke highly of bilateral cooperation in telecommunication and information and communication technology, and pledged to improve the cooperative mechanism in anti-monopoly, supervision of advertisement law and anti-unfair competition, and to expand and deepen cooperation in information exchange in the border area.

Both sides will continue to expand cooperation in disaster relief and strengthen relevant exchange in science and technology and information.

The two sides are willing to boost cooperation in environmental protection and reasonable utilization and protection of cross-border water.

They agreed to continue to organize and hold activities of cultural exchanges between the youths of China and Russia, including an art festival, summer or winter camps and language competitions.

The two sides expressed satisfaction with the successful Russian cultural festival in China this year and support for the Chinese cultural festival in Russia in 2009, which they said will be an important event marking the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

The two sides will encourage their libraries, museums and theaters to set up direct contacts and develop cooperation.

Both countries will also continue to deepen cooperation in health-care services, especially in such fields as prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, rest cure and medicine supervision.

They will facilitate sports exchanges and cooperation, agreeing to hold the 3rd China-Russia youth games in 2009.

The two sides will comprehensively implement bilateral accords and programs in tourism, and improve the mechanism and expand cooperation in such fields as media, movie production and file management.

They agreed to hold the 14th regular prime ministers' talks in China next year on a date to be decided through diplomatic discussions.

During the 13th prime ministers' regular talks, the two countries signed a number of documents, including several agreements on cooperation in such fields as energy, banking and high technology.

Wen arrived here Monday for a three-day official visit to Russia aimed at strengthening China's strategic partnership with the country.

Russia is the first leg of Wen's two-nation tour, which will also take him to Kazakhstan.

[Cambodia, Vietnam to Ink Agreements On Bilateral Cooperation](#)

Xinhua— October 29

Cambodia and Vietnam will sign five agreements soon in the fields of visa exemption, goods transportation across the border and information exchange of radio stations, said a press release here on Wednesday.

The signing ceremony will be held while Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen visits Vietnam in early November to participate in regional summits, said the press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Hun Sen will lead an official delegation to attend the third summit of the Ayeyawady, Chao Phraya, Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) and the fourth regional summit among Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, it said.

The delegation will include the premier's wife Bun Rany, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Hor Namhong, Commerce Minister Cham Prasidh and other senior government officials, it added.

[SCO Prime Ministers Discuss Co-Op In Astana](#)

Xinhua –October 30

The prime ministers of the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) met in Astana Thursday to discuss the promotion of cooperation within the organization.

At the meeting that gathered Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and prime ministers of other SCO countries, a joint declaration was issued on the status quo of and prospects for the pragmatic cooperation within the organization in such fields as politics, economy and trade, and culture.

The SCO, an inter-governmental organization founded in Shanghai in 2001, groups China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan, India, Iran and Mongolia are observer nations.

The SCO members vowed to go all out to implement the consensus reached by SCO leaders at their Dushanbe summit in August in a bid to promote the steady and sustained development of multilateral cooperation within the organization. The prime ministers are satisfied with the progress in cooperation on economy, trade and culture since their regular meeting last year in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent, the declaration said.

They agreed to deepen cooperation in all fields in line with an amended guideline concerning the implementation of the multilateral economic and trade cooperation approved at the meeting.

Joint work should be done to provide a stable and predictable environment for trade and to strengthen the market mechanism, the prime ministers said.

The member states agreed to enhance cooperation in enhancing energy efficiency, developing clean energy, utilizing renewable energy and ensuring energy security.

They also vowed to boost cooperation in transportation, customs supervision and health care.

The rational and efficient use of water resources is significant to the sustainable development of the Central Asian countries, the prime ministers noted, adding that an upcoming meeting of SCO environmental protection officials is of vital importance.

The prime ministers reiterated the importance of cooperation in disasters prevention and relief, adding a regular meeting of leading officials in charge of disaster relief will be held in the first half of 2009.

The prime ministers called for a meeting of agriculture ministers of the member states to coordinate policies on ensuring regional food security and promoting

agricultural production. They also noted the broad prospects for cooperation on modern information technology.

In view of the need to strengthen links between businesses and banks, the prime ministers proposed that an economic forum of major business leaders from member states be jointly sponsored by bank officials and entrepreneurs. Participation of observer countries in member states' meetings is conducive to attracting these countries into the cooperation projects within the SCO framework, the prime ministers said.

The Chinese premier arrived here Wednesday evening on a three-day official visit to Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is the second leg of his two-nation tour which has already taken him to Russia, where Wen held talks with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and met with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and parliament leaders.

Wen and Putin also attended the third Sino-Russian economic forum in Moscow. The two countries signed a series of cooperation agreements in economy, trade, science and technology, energy and culture.

[Libya Offers Home for Russian Base](#)

Defense News – October 30

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, who visits Moscow on Oct. 31 for the first time since 1985, will offer to host a Russian naval base in his north African country, a Russian newspaper reported.

"Libya is ready to host a Russian naval military base," the Kommersant reported, citing a source close to the preparations for Qadhafi's first visit here since the days of the Soviet Union.

The base could be located at the port of Benghazi, the source said.

"The Russian military presence will be a guarantee of non-aggression against Libya from the United States, which is not in a hurry to embrace Qadhafi despite gestures of reconciliation," the newspaper said.

Qadhafi's offer could also "ease the Kremlin's dissatisfaction" over his failure to fulfill agreements reached in April during a landmark visit to Tripoli by then-President Vladimir Putin, Kommersant said.

During the visit, Moscow agreed to cancel billions of dollars of Libyan Soviet-era debt in exchange for major contracts with Russian companies.

Those agreements included a promise by Tripoli to buy Russian arms, but "despite the agreement, Qadhafi still has not bought a single tank or airplane," Kommersant reported.

Russia was also disappointed that energy-rich Libya did not agree to join a "gas OPEC" along with fellow gas exporter Qatar, Kommersant said.

Qadhafi is scheduled to visit Russia through Nov. 2.

Relations between Russia and Libya, a former pariah state that has pushed to get back into the international fold in recent years, showed signs of significant warming this year after a long chill.

Earlier this month, a Russian warship docked in Tripoli as part of a global show of force that is set to include joint naval exercises between Russia and Venezuela in the Caribbean in November.

In April, Russian gas giant Gazprom signed a cooperation agreement with Libya's national energy company while Russia's rail monopoly signed a 2.2-billion-euro contract to build a railway line in Libya. Libya bought many of its weapons from Moscow during the Cold War.

[India's growing military power](#)

The Daily Star – November 1

India is gradually showing signs of military assertiveness as it is becoming an economic power.

India is the second largest populous country (nearly 1.1 billion) in the world and seventh largest in geographical area. It is twenty-three times larger than Bangladesh. There are almost 1,000 people for every square mile of area nationwide, much denser than China. India is likely to overtake China in the 21st century as the world's most populous country.

Under the US-India nuclear deal, it will receive nuclear fuel and technology and will be much more capable to enlarge its nuclear arsenal. According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, the India's Defense Ministry has earmarked US\$ 2 billion annually to build 300 to 400 weapons over the next 5 to 7 years. Currently India has about 50 to 95 nuclear warheads.

Analysts say that there are many reasons for acquiring military power and some of them are described below:

Government officials argue that India's commitments have gradually increased both at home and abroad.

India's buildup has several overlapping motivations. It now trades vigorously with the world, most critically in oil. It has bought oil fields or engaged in exploration in Iran, Iraq, Libya, Russia, Sudan, Syria, Vietnam and beyond.

A more robust military is also vital for protecting millions of Indian workers in the Gulf, who are from time to time threatened by political volatility. But the most pressing motivation may be the fast-moving Chinese.

"Immediately after independence, true, we had to engage ourselves for developing our country economically, politically because we were exploited under colonial rule for more than 200 years," Pranab Mukherjee, India's External Affairs Minister (a former Defence Minister) said in an interview.

Now, he said, things have changed: "Naturally, a country of this size, a population of this size we will be required to strengthen our security forces, modernize them, update them, upgrade our technology."

"We are ready to play a more responsible role," he added, "but we don't want to impose ourselves on others."

In a speech in India's Parliament this summer, a rising political star, Rahul Gandhi, M.P, son of Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi and an official of the Congress Party spoke of a change in civilian thinking that helps explain the change in military strategy.

"What is important," said Rahul Gandhi, "is that we stop worrying about how the world will impact us, we stop being scared about how the world will impact us, and we step out and worry about how we will impact the world."

Middle-aged Indians remember a time when their country would watch thousands of Indians in jeopardy in a foreign land and know that there was nothing their military could do.

But in 2006, when conflict between Israel and Hezbollah threatened Indian expatriates in Lebanon, four Indian warships happened to be in the Mediterranean. The navy rushed the vessels to Lebanon and brought more than 2,000 people on board, not only Indians, but Sri Lankans, Nepalese and Lebanese eager to escape the fighting.

Two years earlier, when a tsunami throttled Asia, including this country's own southern coast, the Indian Navy dispatched 16,000 troops, 32 warships, 41 planes and a floating hospital for rescue operations, according to news accounts.

Such changes bring pride to many Indians. But some also fear that India may become the kind of swaggering power it has opposed since it became independent from Britain in 1947.

In recent years, while world attention has focused on China's military, India has begun to refashion itself as an armed power with global reach: a power willing and able to dispatch troops thousands of miles from the subcontinent to protect its oil shipments and trade routes, to defend its large expatriate population in the Middle East and to shoulder international peacekeeping duties.

"India sees itself in a different light not looking so much inward and looking at Pakistan, but globally," said William Cohen, a secretary of defense in the Clinton administration who, in his new role as a lobbyist, represents American firms seeking weapons contracts in India. "It's sending a signal that it's going to be a big player."

India is buying armaments that major powers like the United States use to operate far from home: aircraft carriers, giant C-130J transport planes and airborne refueling tankers. Meanwhile, India has helped to build a small air base in Tajikistan that it will share with its host country.

It is modern India's first military outpost on foreign soil. India also appears to be positioning itself as a caretaker and patroller of the Indian Ocean region, which stretches from Africa's coast to Australia's and from the subcontinent southward to Antarctica.

"Ten years from now, India could be a real provider of security to all the ocean islands in the Indian Ocean," said Ashley Tellis, an Indian-born scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington who has also been an adviser to the Bush administration. "It could become a provider of security in the Gulf in collaboration with the U.S. I would think of the same being true with the Central Asian states."

Observers say that Indian military planning is still heavily focused on China and Pakistan, against both of which the country has fought wars. China, whose own military expansion outstrips India's, has not sounded public warnings about India's military modernization but Pakistan is more critical about it.

Pakistani officials "are paying attention to Indian plans to project India outside the South Asian region," said Hasan Askari Rizvi, a leading Pakistani expert on that country's military.

"There seems to be an emerging long-term competition between India and China for pre-eminence in the region," said Jacqueline Newmyer, President of the Long Term Strategy Group, a research institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a security consultant to the United States government. "India is preparing slowly to claim its place as a pre-eminent power, and in the meantime China is working to complicate that for India."

India has worked to close the gap with China by spending heavily on modern arms. Analysts estimate that India could spend as much as \$40 billion on military modernization in the next five years (China is spending \$90 billion dollars on defense budget). What is most striking is that many of the weapons are designed for operations far from home.

Among the more notable purchases are six IL-78 airborne tankers, which can refuel three jets simultaneously and allow the air force to fly as far as Alaska. Other armaments recently acquired or in the pipeline include naval destroyers, nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers and the C-130J transport planes that are a staple of long-range conflicts.

India is slowly but steadily maturing into a conventional great power. Times have changed when India which gave the world the idea of Gandhian non-violence and, has long derided the force-projecting ways of the great powers is now showing military muscle to demonstrate that India is “rising” and should be given the role in world affairs commiserating its size, resources and population.

[China a threat to space assets of other nations](#)

India Post –November 02

On September 27 China reached another milestone in its space program when a Chinese taikonaut, Zhai Zhigang, ventured out of the spacecraft, Shenzhou-7, and performed a 30 minute-long spacewalk. Shortly after the taikonaut returned from the spacewalk, the Shenzhou-7 released a micro-satellite BX-1, weighing 40kg and measuring 40cm on each side, to take pictures of the orbiting mother spaceship.

The BX-1, orbiting in tandem with Shenzhou-7, took thousands of stunning pictures of the mother spaceship, leaving the world greatly impressed about China's growing scientific and technical capabilities.

Live telecast of the launch of Shenzhou-7 - the first such event in the history of China was equally impressive, as it reflected China's growing confidence in itself as a space power to reckon with. The release of the micro-satellite from Shenzhou-7 and the unintended trajectory it gained immediately after the release - the micro-satellite began to drift away from Shenzhou-7 after its release but it was finally brought under control - have since left many unanswered questions with rising fears whether China could have done this with the intention of testing capabilities required to develop a co-orbital anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon.

Unlike India, China's space programme is under the control of its military. Therefore, the strategic implications of China's recent rendezvous with space cannot be completely ruled out. Micro-satellites such as the one used by China can be also used for non-kinetic communication or surveillance missions.

It is no longer a secret that China is developing asymmetric capabilities to fight in space. In January 2007, China stunned the world by directly shooting down with a ballistic missile, one of its own obsolete weather satellites orbiting about 537 miles above earth.

The missile carried a "kill vehicle" and destroyed the satellite by ramming it. That experiment clearly demonstrated China's ability in tracking and bringing down an orbiting satellite from stand-off positions on earth.

The growth of China as a space power given its asymmetric capabilities poses pertinent danger to the space assets of other nations. A disturbing fact related to Shenzhou-7 that has now surfaced is that Shenzhou-7 had orbited dangerously close to the International Space Station, flying to a distance of about 45km (27 miles) from it.

The US and Russia spend huge amounts of money to keep the ISS safe from homing objects in space, as such they have developed capabilities required to maneuver it away before any object actually hits it. Similar efforts would be needed by developing nations who intend to put up space stations in future or even by those nations who already have their satellites orbiting in outer space.

Besides China, at least three other Asian powers, India, Japan and South Korea have planned ambitious space missions, including manned lunar missions and setting up of space stations at some point of time in the future.

The Chinese are masters in the art of deception and it should not come as a surprise if the Chinese let BX-1 drift away on purpose to test maneuverability required in colliding a micro-satellite with an in-coming space object.

The decision by India to set up an Integrated Space Cell in June this year, to function as a single window for integration among the armed forces, the Department of Space and the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) could have been largely influenced by China's experiment with ASAT weapon in 2007. Elsewhere, Japan's parliament passed a law on May 21 that would allow its military to launch advanced satellites for intelligence gathering and missile defense.

The law, however, restricts the military use of space only for defensive purposes. As China and India are engaged in strategic competition with each other, it is essential that India closely monitors China's every move in space.

For the past many years, the Chinese have been striving hard to achieve modern fighting capabilities consistent with Western technology and space continues to remain an integral part of their military modernization goals.

Given the current pace of China's military reform and no let-up in budgetary allocations to sustain it, it is quite probable that China will bridge the present technological lag with Western militaries sooner rather than later.

However, until China is fully confident of its fighting capabilities in the present techno-scientific spectrum, it is more likely to avoid direct confrontation with western powers. As an interim arrangement, it has adopted the policy to exploit asymmetric means to neutralize or deny any technical advantage that its adversaries might enjoy.

[Medvedev's Ambitious Military Reform Plans](#)

Eurasia Daily Monitor – November 4

The T-80 Chernyy Orel tank is part of Russia's military modernization plans. Russia has announced its most ambitious, systemic military modernization program since the collapse of the USSR, scheduled to deliver a more efficient and combat-ready military by 2020. These plans betray breathtaking confidence. They will include 955 Borey-type submarines, armed with the Bulava sea-launched ballistic missile; ground-based modernized Topol-M ballistic missiles that will completely replace conventional Topols; modern tanks for the army (for instance, the T-80 Chernyy Orel [Black Eagle]); air defense systems (the S-400 surface-to-air missile system); and fifth-generation Russian fighters (series deliveries of the state-of-the-art, multi-purpose Su-35 fighters are due to begin in 2011) (Izvestia, October 20).

Perhaps even more ambitious are the plans to upgrade all units and subunits to the category of permanent combat readiness units (at the moment the ratio of combat to general readiness units is one to five). There is little public discussion of how these plans may be negatively affected by the sliding price of oil and the economic crisis currently faced by Russia, which until recently has been played down by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. There are elements of these reforms, however, that have been underestimated by Western commentators and are worth noting. They are a result of Russia's experience in the war with Georgia in August: the shift to a brigade-based organization and a rapid reaction system that takes existing airborne troops and remolds them to provide more rapidly deployable troops from each military district. Taken together, these reform plans suggest that the Kremlin envisages using conventional warfare to resolve future crises.

The Russian Defense Ministry plans to develop new combat training programs based on its analysis of other military conflicts in recent years, including both Western experience in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Soviet experience of Afghanistan and the more recent Russia-Georgia conflict. On October 30 Lieutenant-General Vladimir Shamanov, chief of the armed forces' Main Combat Training and Service Directorate, said that:

"Training programs for services and service arms are being reassessed with due account taken of the specifics of the operation to rebuff the Georgian aggression against South Ossetia and of the experience gained in Chechnya. We are also bearing in mind the Soviet Army's experience in Afghanistan, the United States' operations in Iraq, and other armed conflicts" (Interfax, October 30).

Though Russia's leadership is arguably buoyed by the success of its conflict with Georgia and the fact that it has largely avoided the threatened international isolation that was promised in August, a "lessons learned" approach is in evidence in its military reform planning. The lessons learned from the operation in South Ossetia include the Mood's drawing up a list of modern tactical weapons and military hardware, taking the five-day war in the Caucasus into consideration. Shamanov not only advocates devising lists of weaponry needed for tactical warfare down to battalion level, but in future operations he wants the troops to be issued modern global positioning and communications devices and integrated with the tactical fire control system. These changes, or aspirations, result from the more detailed systemic changes planned in the Russian army, namely, switching to a brigade-based structure that moves away from a division based approach (Interfax, October 30).

This switch in the Russian Armed Forces from an organization based on divisions to one based on brigades will begin in January 2009 and should be concluded in 2012. It is intended to optimize and streamline the entire structure of the Russian army and form permanent readiness units and brigades. Russian Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov told journalists in Moscow that the armed forces would switch from the four-level system, military district-army-division-regiment, to the three-level system: military district-operative command-brigade. "This means there will be no division-regiment level but brigades instead," Serdyukov said (Interfax, October 30).

Russia's military reform priorities include forming an airborne brigade to carry out "rapid reaction" roles, in each of the six Military Districts. The Russian MoD has decided to disband one of the airborne divisions (VDV, Airborne Troops), the 106th Tula, as there aren't enough airborne troops for all of the military districts in order to form the nucleus of the future brigades. The Airborne Troops are currently composed of two airborne divisions (the 106th and 98th), the 76th Air Assault Division (Pskov), the 31st Separate Air Assault Brigade, and the Seventh Mountain Division. The Tula Airborne Division consists of three regiments (including an artillery regiment), an air defense missile battery, and support units and subunits. The total personnel strength is over 5,000 men (Komsomolskaya Pravda, October 25).

Serdyukov believes these changes will eliminate the multi-tiered structures and increase the effectiveness of command and control. At the same time, all non-fully-manned (cadre) units will be disbanded, and only permanent combat-readiness units will be left in the Army. The Russian army will no longer be a

mobilization force but one based higher readiness formations. Serdyukov said that he did not see the necessity of creating independent rapid-reaction forces:

"We are proceeding from the fact that the Armed Forces already have such units. They are the Airborne Troops. They acquitted themselves effectively enough, while repelling Georgian aggression in South Ossetia. It is another thing to strengthen such units: a VDV brigade will appear in every military district to carry out urgent missions and action in unpredictable circumstances" (Kommersant Vlast, Moscow, October 20).

As these ambitious plans unfold, no doubt they will be modified and adjusted as a result of economic and other pressures. Nonetheless, we may be witnessing the first real moves toward Russian military reform; and the implications for Western planning staffs, including NATO, are far from clear. Since 1991 Western understanding of Russia's armed forces has been predicated upon analyzing their weaknesses and lack of successful reform. The political leadership in Moscow seems to be signaling that this is about to change.

[China and Taiwan in landmark deal](#)

BBC News – November 4

China and Taiwan have signed landmark agreements to improve direct trade and transport links, following the highest-level Chinese visit in decades.

The agreements are set to triple the number of weekly direct passenger flights and allow cargo shipments between ports in China and Taiwan.

They also aim to improve the postal service and food safety.

China claims sovereignty over Taiwan though they have been separately governed since 1949.

The agreements were announced on the second day of a five-day visit to Taiwan by Chen Yunlin, China's top official for handling relations with Taiwan.

Previously, sovereignty issues involving vessels and crews forced costly detours through third countries, while China-Taiwan flights were forced to stop in Hong Kong or Macau.

Under the agreements:

- Direct charter flights will increase from 36 to 108, and can operate daily rather than four days out of seven
- Routes will be shortened and private business jet flights will be allowed
- Direct cargo shipments will be allowed between 11 Taiwan sea ports and 63 in China, tax free

- Sixty direct cargo flights will be allowed per month
- Direct postal links will be expanded to improve delivery time, currently up to 10 days
- Food safety alerts between the countries will be set up.

Taiwan has the diplomatic recognition of a handful of states.

But since Mao Zedong's Communists won the Chinese civil war and the defeated Kuomintang fled to Taiwan, China has regarded it as a breakaway province which it has threatened to reunify using force.

Taipei protests

The latest trade agreements come after the two sides held their first, high-level meeting in a decade in June this year, in Beijing.

The improvement in relations follows the election of President Ma Ying-jeou in Taiwan.

However, Mr Ma's overtures of ending decades of political rivalry with Beijing have sparked fierce protests in Taiwan, including accusations that he is "selling out" to the mainland.

Pro-independence groups staged small protests around Taipei to coincide with Mr Chen's visit, waving flags and banners.

Thousands of police were deployed to ensure Mr Chen's safety, after his deputy Zhang Mingqing was jostled and knocked to the ground by protesters during a visit to Taiwan in October

[Gaddafi seeks Russia energy pact](#)

BBC News – November 1

The Libyan leader, Col Muammar Gaddafi, has said he hopes to increase energy ties with Russia, during his first visit to Moscow since the Soviet era.

Col Gaddafi said closer co-operation between the two major gas and oil producers was "particularly important".

Correspondents say Russia wants Libya to support its plans for a cartel of gas-producing nations, similar to Opec.

It has also been reported that the two countries are negotiating a civilian nuclear co-operation agreement.

Under the deal, Russia would help Libya design, develop and operate nuclear research reactors and provide fuel, Libyan media said.

Libyan Foreign Minister Abdel Rahman Shalgham and state media said Russia's atomic energy agency and the Libyan Committee for Nuclear Energy had already signed the accord, but a spokesman for Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said discussions were still under way.

'Fruitful' talks

Col Gaddafi held separate meetings with President Dmitry Medvedev and with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin at the start of his first visit to Russia since 1985.

The Kremlin gave no details other than to say that energy, and questions of co-ordination in foreign policy, had been the main themes.

"Libya and the Russian Federation are major producers of oil and gas and we included in our delegation the chiefs of our national oil company to discuss questions of co-ordination with their Russian colleagues," the Libyan leader told reporters before the talks with Mr Medvedev.

"Co-operation between our two countries in the oil and gas areas is particularly important in the present situation."

Col Gaddafi noted that previously relations between the two countries had mainly focused on military and diplomatic contacts.

"There was virtually no co-operation in civilian sectors," he added.

A Russian source described Saturday's talks as "fruitful".

Russia is reported to be hoping to persuade Libya to back its plans for a gas-producing cartel that would include Algeria, Iran, Qatar and several Central Asian nations. Such an organisation would strengthen Moscow's ability to control Europe's energy supply.

Prior to the visit, Russian media had speculated that there might also be discussion of further Russian arms sales to Libya, and one report suggested Libya might offer Russia the opportunity to open a naval base in Benghazi.

Russia has only one naval base operating in a foreign country - in Sevastopol in Ukraine. But Ukraine's president has made clear he would like that closed when Russia's lease is up in 2017.

Last month, Russian warships docked in Libya before taking part in joint naval exercises with the Venezuelan navy.

The move came six months after Mr Putin visited Libya, during which he wrote off billions of dollars of Libyan debt, in exchange for multi-billion dollar business deals, including a contract with Russian Railways and another with Gazprom.

There has also been speculation that the Kremlin was hoping to press the Libyan leader over potential arms deals. Col Gaddafi is reportedly in the market for air defence systems, fighter jets, tanks and combat helicopters, as well as service contracts for its ageing Soviet-built arsenal.

In keeping with his habit on foreign visits, the Libyan leader pitched a Bedouin tent in the garden of the Kremlin, the BBC's James Rodgers in Moscow says. A barbecue grill was set up in front.

[NATO Voices Worries about Russian Missile Plans](#)

Agence France-Presse – November 5

NATO has "serious worries" about the compatibility of Russian plans to deploy missiles in a western Russian enclave with arm control "arrangements," an alliance spokesman said Nov. 5.

"We have seen the press reports on the statement of President (Dmitry) Medvedev regarding deployment of Iskander missiles to the Kaliningrad region," spokesman Robert Pszczel said.

"If confirmed, it would raise serious worries concerning the conformity with existing arms control arrangements, which are important for European security," he added.

"Moreover, placing of these Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad region would not help NATO and Russia to improve their relationship."

Medvedev announced earlier Nov. 5 the deployment of conventionally armed ballistic missiles in Kaliningrad, which borders U.S. allies Lithuania and Poland, in response to U.S. missile defense plans.

The Russian leader said the Iskander missiles were being deployed to "neutralize" the threat from planned U.S. missile interceptors in Poland and radar facilities in the Czech Republic.

The U.S. wants to deploy the shield in the central European nations by 2011-2013 to ward off potential attacks by so-called "rogue" states such as Iran. Russia has denounced the plan as a threat to its own security.

Current Iskanders, which carry conventional warheads and which NATO calls SS-26 Stones, are supposed to have a range of up to 280 kilometers, but an

updated version Russia aims to deploy between 2009-2015 could reach close to 500 kilometers (300 miles).

Russia has in the past expressed its intention to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty signed between Moscow and Washington in 1987 that bans missiles with ranges of 500-5,500 kilometers.

Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have not held regular talks since the military alliance decided that their resumption was conditional on an Aug. 12 cease-fire to the brief Russian-Georgian war being respected.

DEFENCE ACQUISITION AND TECHNOLOGY

[Taiwan to produce 300 cruise missiles](#)

Channel News Asia – 27 October

Taiwan plans to manufacture up to 300 cruise missiles, despite warming ties with rival China, it was reported Monday.

"President Ma Ying-jeou has given the order for the production of 300 Hsiungfeng 2E cruise missiles," the Taipei-based China Times said, citing what it said was an unnamed authoritative military source.

However, the paper said it was not clear when the missiles would be put into service.

Taiwan's defence ministry declined to comment on the report.

The paper said Hsiungfeng 2E, which was developed by the military-run Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology, has a range of around 600 kilometres (375 miles).

The missile could be launched on land or at sea, the paper said, and would be capable of hitting airports and missile bases in southeast China, as well as cities such as Shanghai and Hong Kong.

China and Taiwan have been governed separately since the end of a civil war in 1949, but Beijing views the island as part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary.

China has repeatedly threatened to invade Taiwan should the island declare formal independence.

However, tensions across the Taiwan Strait have eased since Beijing-friendly Ma Ying-jeou was elected as president in March vowing to boost the economy and improve ties with China.

[Concern over Venezuela's Russian Arms Purchases Could Be Misplaced](#)

World Politics Review – October 29

Venezuela's strengthening military and diplomatic ties with Russia have led to alarmist headlines announcing the return of a Cold War standoff, and raising questions about the impact of Hugo Chávez's arms shopping spree on the regional balance of power.

But even with the latest arms purchases, Venezuela does not top the list of the region's biggest military powers.

Since 2005, Venezuela has spent over \$4 billion on Russian hardware, including 24 Sukhoi fighter jets and dozens of combat helicopters. The purchase of over 100 T72 tanks to replace older French models is in the pipeline, say Venezuelan military officials. Recent unconfirmed reports in the Russian press suggest that Chávez also has plans to buy Project 636 diesel submarines, Mi-28 combat helicopters and airplanes, and around 20 Tor-M1 air-defense systems.

Furthermore, the presence of two Russian Tu-160 long-range bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons during recent military exercises in Venezuela, as well as Moscow's \$1 billion loan to Chávez for weapons purchases has raised eyebrows.

Chávez says his arms spending is driven by the need to replace obsolete weaponry, as well as legitimate defense concerns. For years, he has claimed that the U.S. is plotting to overthrow him, and has warned about a possible U.S. invasion. A recurring theme of Chávez's anti-U.S. rhetoric -- which reached a new level when he expelled the U.S. ambassador to Caracas last month -- is the need for Venezuela to be prepared to counter a U.S. military threat.

But Chávez's increased arms spending, buoyed by Venezuela's oil windfalls, is neither extraordinary nor unique compared with other countries in Latin America. In fact, most South American nations have raised defense spending, and while Chávez's arms purchases from Moscow have captured the headlines, Chile has been quietly engaged in an arms buildup as well. Between 2003 and 2007, Chile ranked 12th in the world in arms imports. Last year, Colombia spent 2.8 percent of its GNP on defense, compared to Venezuela's 1.14 percent.

"Brazil and Chile still remain the region's strongest military powers with Colombia coming third," says Markus Schultze-Kraft in Bogotá, Latin American director at the International Crisis Group. "It doesn't change the military balance of power in Latin America."

More alarming than Chávez's big ticket purchases is the arrival in Venezuela of 100,000 Russian Kalashnikov assault rifles two years ago, as well as Chávez's reported plans to build a factory to produce his own Kalashnikov line. "The main

problem today in Latin America is small arms and not the high-tech big weapons systems," explains Schultze-Kraft. "The bombers don't represent any sort of real threat to the region or to the U.S. It's the small arms that are problematic."

The question of what happens to the old rifles once they're replaced by the shipments of new Russian AK-47s greatly worries the U.S. and its main ally in the region, Colombia. Both countries suspect that Chávez maintains close ties with Colombia's FARC guerrillas, a long-running allegation that has led to fraught relations between Colombia and Venezuela. Both Washington and Bogotá also believe there is a real risk that the much sought-after AK-47s could end up in the wrong hands, be it FARC guerrillas or drug-traffickers in Mexico and Colombia.

Some observers argue that Chávez's high-profile arms spending in Moscow represents a show of force and bravado rather than a real threat. It is seen as part of a deliberate ploy to deflect attention from Venezuela's domestic woes, including soaring crime and inflation, ahead of what are expected to be tightly contested key local elections in the country next month.

For Russia, the strengthening of the Moscow-Caracas alliance is part of the country's broader strategy to expand ties in the region.

"Latin America is becoming a noticeable link in the chain of the multipolar world that is forming," said Russia's Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin during Chávez's 11th visit to Moscow last month. "We will pay more and more attention to this vector of our economic and foreign policy."

Dan Erickson, senior associate of U.S. Policy at the Inter-American Dialogue, argues that the Moscow-Caracas military alliance is part of Russia's attempt to assert its authority and "exploit an opening in Latin America" amid receding U.S. influence in the region.

"Russia seeks to reassert itself as a world power, which includes a renewed presence in Latin America, while much of the region wants to diversify its economic partners to reduce its dependence on the United States," said Mr Erickson in a report. "None of this favors U.S. influence in the hemisphere, which appears to be in free fall during the Bush Administration's final months in office."

With his well-known hostility towards the U.S., Chávez has become an expedient and ideal business partner for Russia, which is increasingly keen to irritate Washington following the U.S. condemnation of Russia's invasion of Georgia. (Venezuela was one of the few countries to publicly back Russia's latest war.)

But with a global financial crisis and falling oil prices, it's unlikely that Chávez can maintain the pace of his arms spending, making Russian president Dmitry Medvedev's scheduled visit to Caracas next month an interesting barometer of the two countries' unfolding relations.

[Congress OKs Eurofighter Sale to Saudi Arabia](#)

Defense News – October 30

The U.S. Congress on Oct. 30 approved Britain's request to retransfer 24 Eurofighter jets from its inventory to Saudi Arabia and cleared the way for the sale of another 48 new-build aircraft, sources said.

Britain needed U.S. permission to sell the planes to Saudi Arabia because they contain American components. Under a deal finalized in September 2007, Britain will furnish the Royal Saudi Air Force with 72 Eurofighter jets under a deal valued at about \$10 billion.

The deal had been delayed for months after the Senate Foreign Relations Committee asked the Justice Department whether approving the Eurofighter deal would influence its ongoing bribery investigation.

Justice officials have been probing charges that BAE Systems bribed Saudi officials in the 1980s to win the massive Al Yamamah arms contract.

But high-level, intense and complex negotiations between Washington and London over the past month cleared the way for a deal, according to sources.

[US arms deals up 50%](#)

The Straits Times – October 30

The value of worldwide US arms deals soared nearly 50 per cent last year to US\$24.8 billion (S\$36.3 billion) from US\$16.7 billion in 2006, according to a newly released report for the US Congress.

The United States accounted for 41.5 per cent of all such agreements in 2007, followed by Russia, with US\$10.4 billion, or 17.3 per cent, the Congressional Research Service said in the annual report dated Oct 23.

Britain was third, with arms deals valued at US\$9.8 billion, up from US\$4.1 billion in 2006, said the report, titled 'Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 2000-2007'.

The report is based on unclassified data from unspecified US government sources.

Last year's 48.5 per cent jump in US arms deals 'may be a high water mark for the foreseeable future because of the economic difficulties now confronting major purchasers,' the report's author, Mr Richard Grimmett, said in a telephone interview.

The US total reflected, among other things, the advantage of having well-established defence support arrangements based on the range of US weapons already in use with militaries worldwide, the report said.

Deals inked in 2007 include not only sales of major weapons systems, but the upgrading of those sold previously along with pacts for a wide range of spare parts, ammunition, ordnance, training and support services.

Saudi Arabia was the largest buyer among developing countries in 2007, concluding US\$10.6 billion in arms deals, led by an order for 72 Eurofighter Typhoon fighter aircraft valued at more than US\$9 billion, the report said.

India was the second biggest buyer among developing countries with US\$5 billion in agreements, with Pakistan third, with US\$4.2 billion, it said.

The report said Russia's biggest-ticket arms deals continued to be with India and China while it was pushing to expand prospects in North Africa, the Middle East and South-east Asia.

'Most recently, Russia has increased sales efforts in Latin America, despite having essentially abandoned major arms sales efforts there after the end of the Cold War,' it said.

Venezuela has become a significant new arms client gained by Russia in this region, the report said.

'For less affluent developing nations Russia's less expensive armaments are particularly attractive,' the survey said. -- REUTERS

[Fighting with photons](#)

The Economist – October 30

LIKE so much else in science fiction, the ray gun was invented by H.G. Wells. In the tentacles of Wells's *Martians* it was a weapon as unanswerable by earthlings as the Maxim gun in the hands of British troops was unanswerable by Africans. Science fiction, though, it has remained. Neither hand-held pistols nor giant, orbiting anti-missile versions of the weapon have worked. But that is about to change. The first serious battlefield ray gun is now being deployed. And the next generation, now in the laboratory, is coming soon.

The deployed ray gun (or “directed-energy weapon”, in the tedious jargon that military men seem compelled to use to describe technology) is known as Zeus. It is not designed to kill. Rather, its purpose is to allow you to remain at a safe distance when you detonate unexploded ordnance, such as the homemade roadside bombs that plague foreign troops in Iraq.

This task now calls for explosives. In practice, that often means using a rocket-propelled grenade, so as not to expose troops to snipers. But rockets are expensive, and sometimes miss their targets. Zeus is effective at a distance of 300 metres, and a laser beam, unlike a rocket, always goes exactly where you point it.

At the moment, there is only one Zeus in the field. It is sitting in the back of a Humvee in an undisclosed theatre of war. But if it proves successful it will, according to Scott McPheeters of the American army's Cruise Missile Defence Systems Project Office for Directed Energy Applications, be joined by a dozen more within a year.

You fight with light?

If Zeus works, it will make soldiers' lives noticeably safer. But what would really make a difference would be the ability to destroy incoming artillery rounds. The Laser Area Defence System, LADS, being developed by Raytheon, is intended to do just that—blowing incoming shells and small rockets apart with laser beams. The targets are tracked by radar and (if they are rockets) by infrared sensors. When they come within range, they are zapped.

If it works, LADS will be a disruptive technology in more senses than one. It will probably supersede Raytheon's Phalanx system, which uses mortars to do the same thing. Phalanx and its competitors require lots of ammunition, and can be overwhelmed by heavy barrages. By contrast, Mike Booen, vice-president of Advanced Missile Defence and Directed Energy Weapons at Raytheon, observes, as long as LADS is supplied with electricity it has "an infinite magazine".

And LADS is merely the most advanced of a group of anti-artillery lasers under development. Though Raytheon is convinced it is on to a winner and is paying for most of the development costs out of its own pocket, it has received some money from the Directed Energy Weapons Programme Office of the American navy. In August, inter-service rivalry reared its head, when the army handed Boeing a \$36m contract to develop a similar weapon, known at the moment as the High Energy Laser Technology Demonstrator.

The army's Space and Missile Defence Command is also in the game. Its Joint High Power Solid State Laser, a prototype of which should be ready next summer, is meant to destroy rockets the size of the Katyushas used by insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq, and by Hizbullah in Lebanon.

The most ambitious laser project of all, though, is the Airborne Laser, or ABL, being developed by the American Missile Defence Agency and Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman. The beam is generated by mixing chemicals in a reactor known as a COIL (chemical oxygen iodine laser) and

packs a far bigger punch than the electrically generated beams emitted by systems such as LADS. When mounted in the nose-cone of a specially converted Boeing 747, an ABL should be capable of disabling a missile from a distance of several hundred kilometres.

The aim is to hit large ballistic missiles, including ICBMs, just after they are launched—in the boost phase. The ABL is therefore a son of Ronald Reagan's Star Wars scheme, although in that programme, which dates back to the 1980s, the lasers would have operated from space.

There are many advantages to attacking a missile during its boost phase. First, it is still travelling slowly, so it is easier to hit. Second, it is easy to detect because of its exhaust plume (once the boost phase is over, the engine switches off and the missile follows Newton's law of gravity to its target). Third, if it has boosters that are designed to be jettisoned, it will be a larger target when it is launched. Fourth, any debris will fall on those who launched it, rather than those at whom it was aimed.

Getting the system to work in practice will be hard, though. A missile launch is observed using an infrared detector. Then the missile must be tracked. When the beam fires, the control system must compensate both for aircraft jitter and for distortions in the beam's path caused by atmospheric conditions. And ABL-carrying planes must be in the right place at the right time in the first place. Even so, a number of tests have been carried out, and according to Colonel Robert McMurry, the head of the Airborne Laser Programme Office at Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico, there will be a full-scale attempt to shoot down a boost-phase missile off the coast of California next summer.

All of which is good news, at least for countries able to deploy the new hardware. But wars are not won by defence alone. What people in the business are more coy about discussing is the offensive use of lasers. At least one such system is under development, though. The aeroplane-mounted Advanced Tactical Laser, or ATL, another chemical laser being put together by Boeing and the American air force, is designed to "neutralise" targets on the ground from a distance of several kilometres. Targeting data will be provided by telescopic cameras on the aircraft, by pictures from satellites and unmanned aerial drones, and by human target-spotters on the ground. The question is: what targets?

The ATL's supporters discuss such possibilities as disabling vehicles by destroying their wheels and disrupting enemy communications by severing telephone lines. Killing troops is rarely mentioned. However, John Pike, the director of GlobalSecurity.org, a military think-tank in Alexandria, Virginia, who is an expert on ATL, says its main goal is, indeed, to kill enemy combatants.

Surely this is forbidden?

Boeing is unwilling to discuss the matter and John Wachs, the head of the Space and Missile Defence Command's Directed Energy Division, observes that it is "politically sensitive". The public may have misgivings about a silent and invisible weapon that would boil the body's fluids before tearing it apart in a burst of vapour.

That seems oddly squeamish, though. War is not a pleasant business. It is doubtful that being burst by a laser is worse than being hit by a burst from a machine gun. As the Sudanese found out at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898, the year that "The War of the Worlds" was published, that is pretty nasty too.

[Singapore's first F-15 SG fighter plane rolls off Boeing production line](#)

Channel NewsAsia – November 3

Singapore's first F-15 SG fighter plane has rolled off the Boeing factory production line.

It is the Republic of Singapore Air Force's (RSAF) latest acquisition, replacing its fleet of A-4 Super Skyhawks. Singapore has ordered 24 F-15 SGs, believed to cost over US\$1 billion.

The F-15 SG is the world's most advanced version of the jet ever produced. The F-15 is also perhaps one of the most successful fighter jets in modern history. It has a perfect air combat record with 104 campaign victories and no losses.

Boeing has produced more than 1,500 F-15s over the past three decades.

Currently, five countries use the aircraft, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, Israel, South Korea and Japan. Singapore will be the first country in Southeast Asia to fly the F-15.

The RSAF will benefit greatly from the spares and repair pipeline that will be established for the US Air Force. They will also benefit from the training and tactics developed by the US Air Force for the F15E.

When the Singapore aircrew arrive to train at Mountain Home Air Force Base, they will be training alongside the US Air Force's air and maintenance crews.

In December 2005, Singapore officially awarded the contract to Boeing, and production of the F-15 SGs started in March 2007.

When delivered, the F-15 SG will be one of the new components in the on-going third generation transformation of the Singapore Armed Forces.

The production of one F-15 SG takes about 36 months, before it is being prepped for its first flight. Following that, there is a round of flight tests and system configurations before Boeing delivers the first F-15 SG to the RSAF.

[New Missiles Debut At Airshow China In Zhuhai](#)

People's Daily – November 3

The 7th China International Aviation & Aerospace Exhibition will be held on November 4th to 9th, 2008 in Zhuhai Airshow Centre, South China's Guangdong province.

At the exhibition, "the Chinese missile defense system concept" will be comprehensively displayed. A new set of Chinese missile equipment, including the SY 400 rocket-powered guided missile weapon system, will make its debut.

The China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation revealed on November 1st, that 158 scientific and technological achievements in five categories, including missile armaments, hi-tech Olympic products and emergency rescue equipment, will be presented at the Zhuhai Airshow.

According to information, with regards to the missile weapons systems, the three major types of missiles, air defense missile, coastal defense missile, and ground-to-ground missile, will be fully exhibited in terms of systemization, large scale size, comprehensive range, and sophisticated qualities.

Amongst them, the SY 400 rocket-powered guided missile weapon system, FL-3000N ship self-defense missile weapon system, C705 anti-ship missile and C602 anti-ship missile, will make their first appearances.

[Saudis are top arms buyer in developing world](#)

World Tribune – November 4

Saudi Arabia has regained its position as the leading purchaser of weapons in the developing world.

A report asserted that Saudi Arabia was ranked No. 1 in the developing world in arms transfer agreements and weapons acquisitions. The Congressional Research Service said Saudi Arabia achieved the ranking in 2007 after years of reduced military procurement.

"In 2007, Saudi Arabia ranked first in the value of arms transfer agreements among all developing nations weapons purchasers, concluding \$10.6 billion in such agreements," the U.S. report, authored by analyst Richard Grimmett, said. "India ranked second with \$5 billion in such agreements."

The report, titled "Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 2000-2007," said Saudi Arabia marked the resumption of an Arab military buildup since

2007. CRS said seven of the top weapons recipients last year were in the Middle East.

"Most recently, the position of Saudi Arabia as principal arms purchaser in the Persian Gulf region has been re-established," the report said. "In the period from 2000-2003, Saudi Arabia's total arms agreements were valued at \$3.2 billion -- in current dollars -- less than the levels of the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Israel. For the period from 2004-2007, Saudi Arabia's total arms agreements were \$23.2 billion, making it the leading Near East purchaser once again."

CRS said the Middle East accounted for 46.3 percent of all developing nation arms transfer agreements from 2004 to 2007. During the period of 2000-2003, the Middle East represented 42.3 percent of military contracts by developing nations.

The report said the United States has fallen sharply from its position as the leading weapons supplier to the Middle East. During 2004-2007, CRS said the United States accounted for 32.8 percent of military contracts to the Middle East, down from 73.6 percent from 2000 to 2003. Since 2004, Britain captured 27.9 percent of the Middle East market; Russia accounted for 20.9 percent of arms transfer agreements.

"Most recently, the nations in the Near East and Asia regions have resumed large weapons purchases in contrast with arms sales activity in the earliest years of this report," the report said. "These major orders continue to be made by a select few developing nations in these regions. They have been made principally by India and China in Asia, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the Near East. These purchasing tendencies are subject to abrupt change based on the strength of either the threat assessments of individual states or the strength of their individual economies."

Meanwhile, U.S. defense contractors have been investing in training and developing several Saudi companies. The contractors have awarded maintenance and support projects that enhanced Saudi aerospace capabilities.

Boeing has been a key contractor in enhancing Saudi defense companies. The U.S. defense giant has awarded the Saudi company, Alsalam Aircraft Co., a \$29 million contract to maintain the C-130 air transport fleet of the Royal Saudi Air Force.

Under the three-year contract, Alsalam would provide programmed depot maintenance for 50 C-130s. Executives said this would include C-130 repairs, inspections, maintenance, modifications and repainting at Alsalam facilities in Riyadh.

"We are honored to have this contract," Alsalam president Mohammed Fallatah said. "Through our highly skilled work force and excellent facilities, we will provide the kingdom of Saudi Arabia with efficient and timely PDM support for its C-130s."

Alsalam, established in 1998, has been deemed one of Saudi Arabia's leading defense companies. The company works with Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and BAE systems and maintains Saudi air force F-15s, AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and the E-3A Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft. Executives said Alsalam was also working on BAE's Tornado combat aircraft at its facilities in Dhahran.

"Alsalam is one of the largest and most experienced maintenance, repair and overhaul companies in the Arabian Gulf region," Boeing said on Oct. 21.

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

[NATO ship carries out 1st anti-piracy mission off Somalia](#)

China View – October 28

A NATO warship has just completed the alliance's first anti-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia by escorting a shipment of supplies to an African Union mission in the country, said NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on Monday.

"The state of play is that one NATO ship just finished escorting a ship which was bringing in supplies for the Burundian battalion...in Somalia," Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told reporters.

He said a second ship is escorting a World Food Program (WFP) ship and will dock on Tuesday.

"The operation is moving well," he said.

Three NATO ships -- from Italy, Greece and Britain -- have been deployed to escort WFP food shipments and patrol the waters to deter acts of piracy until a European Union (EU) mission is in place.

The three NATO ships are allowed to use force pursuant to the authorized rules of engagement and in compliance with relevant international and national law, said NATO's top military command for operations on Friday.

The ships were ordered to redirect toward Africa at short notice after NATO defense ministers agreed two weeks ago to send warships to carry out anti-piracy duties off the coast of Somalia. The decision was in response to a request by the WFP and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Rampant piracy on the waters is making food shipments impossible without escorts. At the same time the WFP shipments are crucial as over 40 percent of the Somali population depends on WFP food aid.

[French, Spanish Ministers Launch Anti-Piracy Plan](#)

Defense News – November 2

The defense ministers of France and Spain on November 2 launched a European Union military operation to combat piracy off the Somali coast.

"This is the inception of the operation which will be formalized on November 10" at a meeting of EU defense ministers in Brussels, French Defence Minister Herve Morin told reporters.

Accompanied by his Spanish counterpart Carme Chacon, he was speaking in Djibouti, where the pair were on a brief visit to assess multinational efforts to secure the strategic Somali waters and review their anti-piracy arsenal.

Both French and Spanish ships were among the at least 77 vessels attacked for ransom by Somali pirates since the start of the year.

What French President Nicolas Sarkozy has described as a "criminal industry" has threatened to disrupt world trade with relentless attacks in the Gulf of Aden, through which 30 percent of the world's oil transits.

The high-profile case of the September capture by pirates of a Ukrainian cargo loaded with weapons apparently destined for southern Sudan has contributed in spurring the international community into action.

France, which has a major military base in neighboring Djibouti, is so far the only country to have used its firepower against the pirates in April and September operations following hostage-takings.

Spain has pledged two ships and one surveillance aircraft to the new operation, while France has opened its base to the Spanish forces for logistical support.

Morin said Britain would take the command of the joint force and added that other contributions from Greece, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden were awaiting final confirmation.

NATO warships recently arrived in the region in a bid to secure the maritime delivery of food aid to the civilian population of Somalia, where a deadly civil conflict continues to rage.

Experts have warned however that sending foreign warships to such a vast area would hardly sound the death knell of Somali piracy, which has flourished in recent months.

Pirates argue that their attacks are in retaliation for the plundering of their water resources by foreign fishing navies and the dumping of toxic waste in their waters.

They often cite France and Spain as among the worst offenders on the issue of illegal fishing.

MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

[U.S. Deploys Radar, Troops To Israel](#)

Defense News – September 26

U.S. European Command (EUCOM) has deployed to Israel a high-powered X-band radar and the supporting people and equipment needed for coordinated defense against Iranian missile attack, marking the first permanent U.S. military presence on Israeli soil.

More than a dozen aircraft, including C-5s and C-17s, helped with the Sept. 21 delivery of the AN/TPY-2 Transportable Radar Surveillance/Forward Based X-band Transportable (FBX-T), its ancillary components and some 120 EUCOM personnel to Israel's Nevatim Air Base southeast of Beersheba, said sources here and in Stuttgart, Germany.

Among the U.S. personnel is at least one representative from the Missile Defense Agency (MDA), though officials said the agency had little to no say in the deployment decision. MDA involvement has been confined to providing equipment and advice on technical aspects of its deployment, one official said.

The Raytheon-built FBX-T system is the same phased-array radar that was deployed to northern Japan with the U.S. Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) in 2006. The high-powered, high-frequency, transportable X-band radar is designed to detect and track ballistic missiles soon after launch.

Its ancillary gear included cooling systems, generators, perimeter defense weaponry, logistics supplies and dozens of technicians, maintenance specialists and security forces to operate and defend the U.S. installation.

EUCOM has repeatedly deployed troops and Patriot air defense batteries for joint exercises and Iraq-related wartime contingencies, but has never before permanently deployed troops on Israeli soil.

A EUCOM spokesman declined to comment. MDA officials referred to the U.S. State Department, which did not provide comment by press time.

An Israeli military spokesman said the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) enjoys longstanding strategic cooperation with all branches of the U.S. military.

"This cooperation is varied and comes in multiple forms, and it is not our practice to discuss details of our bilateral activities," he said.

Nevertheless, in previous interviews, U.S. and Israeli officials confirmed that the X-band deployment plan was approved in July, first by Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his Israeli counterpart, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi; and then by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

Shaving Minutes From Reaction Time

The radar will be linked to the U.S. Joint Tactical Ground Station (JTAGS), which receives and processes threat data transmitted by U.S. Defense Support System satellites. According to U.S. and Israeli sources, JTAGS will remain in Europe, but its essential cueing data will stream into the forward-deployed X-band radar, where it instantaneously shares information with Israel's Arrow Weapon System.

Once operational, the combined U.S. and Israeli system is expected to double or even triple the range at which Israel can detect, track and ultimately intercept Iranian missiles, according to Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, director of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency.

During a visit to Israel in early August, Obering said the X-Band radar could add precious minutes to the time in which Israel has to respond to incoming missile attacks.

"The missile threat from Iran is very real, and we must stay ahead of the threat ... that's why we're working so hard with all our allies to put the most optimized, effective, anti-missile capabilities in place," Obering said.

"In the context of Israel, if we can take the radar out here and tie it into the Arrow Weapon System, they'll be able to launch that interceptor way before they could with an autonomous system," he added.

Ilan Biton, a brigadier general in the Israel Air Force (IAF) reserves and former commander of the nation's air defense forces, could not comment on the latest developments associated with the X-band radar. However, he said that an IAF air defense brigade established during his 2003-2006 tenure has continuously demonstrated its ability to interoperate well with American forces.

"We advanced tremendously on multiple levels and have developed very impressive cooperation," Biton said at a Sept. 22 conference in Herzliya. Referring to bilateral Juniper Cobra air defense exercises and the 2003 deployment of Patriot batteries prior to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Biton noted: "At the human level, we've developed a common language and at the technical level, we've put in place the interfaces that allow our systems to speak to one another."

The end result, according to Biton, is a combined ability "to manage battles, execute debriefs and implement corrections, all in real time."

Twin Messages

As U.S. public affairs officers last week mulled whether to publicly disclose the Israel deployment, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, at a U.N. General Assembly meeting in New York, continued to defend his country's nuclear enrichment and missile development program.

"Iran's [nuclear] activities are peaceful," Ahmadinejad said Sept. 23, adding that in Israel, "the Zionist regime is on a definite slope to collapse."

A U.S. government source said the X-band deployment and other bilateral alliance-bolstering activities send parallel messages: "First, we want to put Iran on notice that we're bolstering our capabilities throughout the region, and especially in Israel. But just as important, we're telling the Israelis, 'Calm down; behave. We're doing all we can to stand by your side and strengthen defenses, because at this time, we don't want you rushing into the military option.'"

But in Israel, frustration is mounting at what is roundly perceived as a lack of international resolve to halt Iran's nuclear weapons drive. At a Sept. 21 meeting of the Israeli Cabinet, an Israeli military intelligence officer reported that Iran is accelerating the pace at which it enriches uranium, and that Tehran already possesses possibly half of the fissionable material needed to produce its first nuclear warhead.

Reflecting Israeli concern about the ineffectiveness of sanctions against Tehran, Brig. Gen. Yossi Baidatz, head of Military Intelligence's research department, reported: "The international front against Iran is weak and not consolidated, and isn't putting enough pressure on the regime to stop enriching uranium."

According to selected excerpts from the briefing released by the Israeli Prime Minister's office, Baidatz warned that Iran is "galloping toward a nuclear bomb." He added, "The sanctions have very little influence and are far from bringing to bear a critical mass of pressure on Iran."

[Japanese navy ship to intercept missile off Hawaii](#)

GMA News TV – October 31

A Japanese navy ship is due to intercept a separating missile target in a bilateral ballistic missile defense test off Hawaii next month.

The US Missile Defense Agency said Thursday the target will be fired from the Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kauai. The Chokai will shoot it down over the Pacific Ocean.

The agency didn't say when the test would be held.

Last December, Japan became the first US ally to shoot down a mid-range ballistic missile from a ship when the Kongo intercepted a non-separating target off Hawaii.

Separating targets are more difficult to shoot down because the interceptor must distinguish between the target's warhead and booster.

US Navy ships have already intercepted separating ballistic missile targets

[Russian Navy to Hold War Games in Indian Ocean](#)

Defense News – November 1

The Russian navy will hold war games in the Indian Ocean in a bid to boost its global presence, a navy spokesman said Nov. 1, announcing Moscow's latest move to flex its military muscle.

"Ships from the Pacific Ocean Fleet and forces from the Northern Fleet will meet and carry out joint military exercises in the Indian Ocean basin," navy spokesman Igor Dygalo said in a statement.

Dygalo did not specify when the exercises would take place, but he said warships from Russia's Vladivostok-based Pacific Ocean Fleet would leave "shortly" for the Arabian Sea, docking in various ports on the way.

He called the Indian Ocean maneuvers part of an effort to raise the Russian navy's worldwide profile before the end of the year.

"In the remaining months of 2008, Russian Navy Central Command will increase the presence of Russian Navy forces in the world ocean in the interests of strengthening stability and security in its various regions," he said.

This month, a flotilla of Russian warships from the Northern Fleet, based in the Arctic port of Severomorsk, are to hold exercises with the Venezuelan navy in the Caribbean Sea.

The flotilla, led by the massive nuclear-powered missile cruiser Peter the Great, stopped in Libya last month as part of a global show of Russian might not seen since the Cold War.

[Gulf countries to hold joint naval exercises with NATO](#)

The National – November 1

Four Gulf navies are to take part in maritime exercises with visiting Nato ships this week, the first operation under the 2004 Istanbul Co-operation Initiative (ICI).

The initiative, which calls on the alliance to work with the countries of the region, aims to contribute to long-term global and regional security by offering Middle-Eastern countries security co-operation with Nato.

The German, Turkish and US ships are expected to hold their first joint exercise with the Bahraini Royal Navy today.

The exercises will be repeated with other Gulf navies following visits to Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE.

Commodore Andreas Xenakis, Nato's deputy chief of staff, operations, who is based in Naples, said last week the aim of the deployment was to further develop relationships with civil and military authorities.

"The reason we are here is to better understand and develop the co-ordination mechanisms we have with the countries of the region so we know them better and they know us better," he said.

While the Nato deployment was a different and independent operation from the coalition's other ongoing maritime efforts in the region, Commodore Xenakis admitted some parts of their missions do overlap.

"Fighting terrorism is a priority and the countries of the region need our assistance to elaborate their fight against terrorism. It is a common goal for everyone to make the area safer," he said. "The kind of terrorism we are trying to fight does not recognise borders; that is why we have to work closer with each other in order to defeat it".

ICI is part of an effort by Nato to expand the partnership with select countries of the region in areas of security, such as counter-terrorism, defence reform, and co-operation on border security to help prevent illicit trafficking of drugs, weapons and people.

[Korea, Japan, U.S. To Step Up Joint Drills](#)

Chosun Ilbo – November 3

South Korea, Japan and the U.S. will drastically step up joint military drills. An officer at the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Sunday said Korea and the U.S. agreed at their 30th Military Committee Meeting in Washington on Oct. 16 on the need for security cooperation among Korea, the U.S. and Japan “to maintain regional stability.” The three countries will take part in joint military exercises organized by U.S. Pacific Command.

The two countries seem determined to revive a tripartite security system that weakened during the previous administration in Korea.

Korea and Japan have so far participated only in humanitarian search and rescue exercises in the seas as part of the RIMPAC exercise, the largest military exercise in the region initiated by the U.S. military. Under the latest agreement, they are expected to take part in combat exercises as well.

The three countries will discuss the scope of the exercises and size of participating personnel at an annual meeting of chief strategy officers from the three countries, which will be held in December behind closed doors.

Seoul, Washington and Tokyo are also reportedly discussing resuming a trilateral defense strategy conference, which has been suspended since 2006, when Korea boycotted it in the wake of Japanese distortion of history in textbooks. At the same time, Seoul and Washington reportedly agreed to avoid provoking China by strengthening the tripartite security system.

A military officer said U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Michael Mullen “stressed the importance of China's role in reducing tension on the Korean Peninsula and of strengthening cooperation with China so that it can make positive contributions in an emergency on the peninsula.”

[UN caught in new DR Congo clashes](#)

BBC News – November 4

Peacekeepers have been caught up in renewed clashes in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo after days of relative calm, the United Nations says.

Fighting broke out between rebel forces and two pro-government militias, said a UN spokeswoman in the main town, Goma.

Rebel leader Gen Laurent Nkunda last week declared a ceasefire, as his forces approached Goma.

The BBC's Peter Greste in the town says the clashes are worrying but do not necessarily mean the ceasefire is over.

Goma is surrounded by rebel forces, which have routed government forces.

Some 250,000 people have fled their homes and aid agencies are struggling to help them.

Caught in crossfire

Some fled the countryside for Goma but others have since returned, as there is not enough food or shelter for them in the town.

Earlier, the French foreign minister called for the mandate of the 17,000-strong UN peacekeeping force in DR Congo to be strengthened.

UN peacekeeping chief Alain Le Roy, visiting Goma, said the UN mandate was currently to "protect civilians and to support the army in disarming rebel forces".

"Our mandate is not to defend cities," he told the BBC's Network Africa programme.

The latest clashes broke out just north of Rutshuru, around 80km (50 miles) north of Goma, where a UN convoy carrying medical supplies arrived on Monday.

"Our base was caught in the crossfire between CNDP [Gen Nkunda's National Congress for the Defence of the People] forces and Mai-Mai in the north," said UN spokeswoman Sylvie van den Wildenberg.

The UN refugee agency said three camps for displaced people near Rutshuru had been emptied and destroyed.

The UNHCR said it was trying to establish the fate of about 50,000 people who had been sheltering in the area.

Our correspondent says there have been some deliveries of fresh water and high-energy biscuits to those displaced by the fighting but he says this is just scratching the surface of their needs.

Medical aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres said it had been treating displaced people for cholera in mobile clinics.

Diplomatic efforts

Gen Nkunda has threatened to topple the DR Congo government in Kinshasa, 1,580km (980 miles) west of Goma, unless President Joseph Kabila agrees to hold direct talks.

But our correspondent says this could be hubris, as it is hard to see how he could transport his 6-7,000 fighters all the way across a country the size of western Europe.

The rebel forces do, however, appear to have the strength to take Goma, he said.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon says he is ready to fly to the region at the weekend to help mediate a deal to end the conflict.

He said he would meet Mr Kabila and his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame.

But Rwanda said demands for a meeting between the Congolese and Rwandan leaders were based on a "misperception".

"The prevailing assumption that the crisis is a matter between Rwanda and the DRC is wrong, contrary to what some in the international community continue to say," a government statement said.

Gen Nkunda says he is fighting to protect his Tutsi community from attack by Rwandan Hutu rebels, some of whom are accused of taking part in the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Rwanda has repeatedly denied accusations that its forces were supporting Gen Nkunda.

But it has frequently accused the Congolese government of not doing enough to tackle the Rwandan Hutu rebels and has twice invaded its much larger neighbour on these grounds.

Lobby group Global Witness recently accused the Congolese army of working with the rebels to mine gold and tin in the area.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

[North Korea extracted 30.8 kg of plutonium](#)

The Times of India – 24 Oct

North Korea has told China, chair of six-party disarmament talks, it had extracted a total of 30.8 kilograms of plutonium from its Yongbyon nuclear complex, a report said on Friday.

The Dong-a daily quoted an unidentified diplomatic source as saying that the North made the disclosure when it submitted a report on its nuclear facilities and fissile materials to China in June.

Of the 30.8 kilos of plutonium, it used two kilos for its first nuclear test in October 2006 and the rest for "developing nuclear weapons," the daily said.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-Hwan told the National Assembly on Wednesday that the communist state might have produced between six and eight nuclear weapons, calling the number an "estimate."

North Korea this month broadly resumed disabling its weapons-grade nuclear programme following a deal that revived the troubled six-party negotiations, US officials said.

Washington removed North Korea from a list of state sponsors of terrorism on October 11, saying Pyongyang had agreed to steps to verify its nuclear disarmament and pledged to resume disabling its atomic plants under a 2007 deal.

[SKorea: NKorea won't give up nukes easily](#)

ExpressBuzz – 25 October

South Korea's president says it won't be easy for North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

President Lee Myung-bak also says other countries should be patient in verifying North Korea's accounting of its nuclear programs under an aid-for-disarmament pact, and that the process is not likely to proceed smoothly.

Lee's office said he made the comments Saturday at a meeting with Asian and European leaders in Beijing.

North Korea submitted an accounting of its nuclear programs in June. It has recently resumed disabling its nuclear reactor, ending a two-month boycott of the disarmament deal after being removed from a U.S. terrorism blacklist.

[IAEA still undecided on nature of Iran nuclear program](#)

AFP – October 27

UN nuclear watchdog chief Mohamed ElBaradei said here Monday that his agency was still unable to determine whether or not there were undeclared nuclear activities in Iran.

"I regret that we are still not in a position to achieve full clarity regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran," the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) told the UN General Assembly.

He urged Tehran to "implement all the transparency measures required to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program at an early date."

"This will be good for Iran, good for the Middle East region and good for the world," he added.

He stressed he was confident arrangements could be made to enable the IAEA "to clarify the remaining issues while ensuring Iran's legitimate right to protect the confidentiality of sensitive information and activities is respected."

In his own address to the General Assembly, Iran's UN Ambassador Mohammad Khazaee reiterated that the UN Security Council's demand that the Islamic Republic suspend its uranium enrichment program was "illegal."

"The Iranian nation will never accept illegal demands," he added.

Enrichment is at the heart of Western fears that Iran could be seeking nuclear weapons as it can be diverted to make the fissile material for an atomic bomb as well as fuel for nuclear power plants.

The Security Council has already slapped three rounds of sanctions on Tehran which has refused to suspend uranium enrichment insisting its nuclear program is strictly peaceful and solely aimed at generating electricity.

Six major powers -- Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States -- have put forward the possibility of a package of technological, economic and political incentives if it suspends uranium enrichment.

[New millennium, old nuclear policy](#)

The Republican –October 28

It has been 63 years since the United States detonated atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, hastening Japan's surrender and the end of World War II.

The build-up of our atomic arsenal in the decades following was part of the Cold War, the arms race with the Soviet Union that saw each side building more - and more destructive - nuclear weapons. Today, in addition to the United States and Russia, the successor state to the Soviet Union, there are seven other nations across the planet that possess nuclear warheads. More may soon follow.

This is our nuclear world today, dangerous and middle-aged.

It is against this backdrop that Defense Secretary Robert Gates will deliver an address today on the state of our nation's nuclear weapons stockpiles - on where

we are and where we ought to be heading.

There is no definitive information on the number of nuclear warheads that the United States currently has, but the best estimates put the number at about 5,400 at the beginning of the year.

Gates rightly believes that the next president needs to put nukes high on his agenda. More than six decades after the end of World War II, and nearly two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it's high time for a fresh assessment.

Our nuclear arsenal, like it or not, is still a great deterrent. While it can't stop an unconventional attack - like 9/11 - the thousands of nuclear warheads would most assuredly give pause to a nation with a notion of engaging in battle with the United States or one of our allies. No one - not even the most fervent among the no-nukes crowd - could reasonably assert that the United States should get rid of all its nuclear warheads while other nations keep theirs. That's not going to happen. Nor should it.

In the real world, the very nuclear world we live in today, we'd do well to get a handle on the aging arsenal we've currently got - and figure out where we want to be a few years or a decade hence.

Gates' speech today begins that process.

[GCC supports Iran's nuclear work](#)

Press TV – October 28

The Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary-General Abdul Rahman al-Attiyah says the council will continue supporting Iran's nuclear work.

"We have always expressed support for Iran's nuclear program, which we are sure is peaceful," al-Attiyah said in a Tuesday press conference.

Al-Attiyah added that the Persian Gulf littoral states believe peaceful nuclear technology is Iran's inalienable right, slamming global silence toward Israel's nuclear arsenal.

"This is an example of double standards. Israel must disarm all of its nuclear weapons."

Al-Attiyah's Israel remarks come as a Kuwaiti diplomat at the UN, Talal Zaid Al-Azemi, also criticized Israel's refusal to allow inspections of its nuclear facilities at Monday's semi-annual meeting of the UN General Assembly.

"In view of this Israeli intransigence," he said, "we demand the international

community pressure Israel to join the NPT and subject all of its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards regime."

The US and Israel, the Middle East's sole possessor of nuclear warheads, accuse Iran, a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), of conducting a military nuclear program. Iran says it only seeks the civilian applications of the technology.

This is while, Head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohamed ElBaradei, in his September report said that the agency had not found any 'components of a nuclear weapon' or 'related nuclear physics studies' in Iran.

[U.S. Intel Chief Warns of Growing WMD Threat](#)

Global Security Newswire – November 3

There is a growing potential for a WMD incident in coming decades, U.S. National Intelligence Director Michael McConnell said last week (see [GSN](#), Feb. 6).

McConnell addressed the threat as one component of an increasing danger of conflict through at least 2025, Agence France-Presse reported.

Chances of "large casualty terrorist attacks using chemical, biological, or less likely, nuclear materials" are likely to rise in those years, McConnell said during an address Thursday in Nashville.

"What I'm suggesting -- there's an increased potential for conflict," he said. "During the period of this assessment, out to 2025, the probability for conflict between nations and within nation-states will be greater."

China can be expected to become one of the top military powers by 2025, as well as a greater financial power and the No. 1 polluter, McConnell said. India and Russia are also likely to promote themselves on the world stage, he said.

"Strategic rivalries are most likely to revolve around trade, demographics, access to natural resources, investments and technological innovation," he added. "There will be a struggle to acquire technology advantage as the key enabler for dominance" (Agence France-Presse/[Yahoo!News](#), Oct. 31).