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Articles from subscriber only sites are available on request. *Révolutionnaire* is edited by Samuel Chan, with contributions from Bernard Loo and Joshua Ho. The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) is a key research component of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). It focuses on security research to serve national needs. IDSS' faculty and research staff conduct both academic and policy-oriented research on security-related issues and developments affecting Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific. Its research agenda presently comprises the following programmes: Maritime Security, the Revolution in Military Affairs, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Contemporary Islam, Indonesia and China.

## CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

### [Weakened Taliban Step Up Attacks, Mullen Says](#)

*American Forces Press Service – 11 December 2007*

Taliban attacks have picked up this year, but the Afghanistan-based insurgent group is nonetheless growing weaker, the senior U.S. military officer told a congressional committee today. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Michael G. Mullen told U.S. House Armed Services Committee members that earlier this year he'd predicted a resurgence of Taliban attacks. However, Mullen acknowledged, he was only partially correct. Consequently, overall violence is up in Afghanistan by about 27 percent from a year ago, including a significant increase in suicide attacks, Mullen reported. In southern Afghanistan's Helmand province, violence is up more than 60 percent, Mullen said. Al Qaeda and foreign terrorists, supported in some cases by Iran, are contributing "to the deadly mix," the admiral said. Yet, Mullen reported some good news from Afghanistan. "Six years after the fall of the Taliban, most Afghans still see that overthrow as a good thing," Mullen said. Nearly 75 percent of Afghans polled say they support the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, and most want peace and stability for their country, he added. Provincial reconstruction teams operating in Afghanistan "are having a real impact on the quality of thousands of lives," Mullen said. Six times as many children are in school across Afghanistan today, compared to six years ago, he noted. And almost a third of Afghanistan's 6 million students are girls, Mullen added. Some U.S. legislators want to reassess the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, Mullen said, noting he hasn't made up his mind about that yet. However, Mullen told the committee that he's convinced that U.S. and coalition efforts in Afghanistan constitute important work. "It is important, critical work and it must continue," Mullen said of ongoing military and reconstruction operations in Afghanistan. Democracy had been relatively unknown in Afghanistan, Mullen pointed out. "We are sowing seeds of freedom in unaccustomed soil," the admiral said. U.S. decision makers must be patient and realize that U.S. operations in Afghanistan are being conducted under resource constraints, Mullen said. It is simply a matter of resources and capacity, Mullen said. "In Afghanistan, we do what we can. In Iraq, we do what we must," the admiral said. This is why it remains critical that NATO, which assumed responsibility for Afghanistan operations in October 2006, continues "to lead and to lead well," Mullen said.

### [Afghan women make call for peace](#)

*BBC – 12 December 2007*

Women across Afghanistan have been holding meetings to call for peace in their country. Organisers say that at least 1,000 women turned out to hold prayer meetings in six main provinces and share their experiences. The event - called the Women's National Peace Prayer - was held in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand, and at other locations across the country. Such events are highly unusual in war-torn Afghanistan. The country remains deeply conservative and patriarchal, particularly in the south. Then several hundred women were allowed to pray for peace publicly in Kandahar earlier this year, it was said to be the first event of its kind. Now, with violence spreading across the

country, women from five other provinces have joined those in Kandahar to raise their voices for peace. "This is very unusual," said Rangina Hamidi one of the organisers, who argues that the event shows the unity of Afghan women. "I don't think this has happened in the history of Afghanistan - first of all the fact that six different provinces organised themselves together, for no purpose other than peace. "They made the same loud cry - that women are sick and tired of killing and the deaths that come." Organisers say some Afghan women were clearly worried about getting involved in such events. The Kandahar mother whose idea sparked these meetings had asked that her name not be revealed because her family would not approve. Rangina Hamidi said those attending the event in the violence-torn province of Kandahar were particularly happy and relieved that their public meeting passed off without threats or violence. "They were indeed risking their lives," she said, because we really did not know how we would be received. "And to be honest, we hadn't informed any of the security forces to protect us. We wanted to be as natural as possible. "So when women take such an action on themselves, they felt proud of themselves and felt proud of their sisters." Organisers say that Wednesday's meetings marked the beginning of a movement. The goal now is to spread such events across all 34 provinces.

### [U.N.'s Ban concerned about eastern Congo fighting](#)

*Reuters – 12 December 2007*

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the Congolese government on Wednesday to protect civilians endangered by an offensive against Tutsi rebels and he urged the rebels to lay down their arms. Ban's spokeswoman Marie Okabe said an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 people already displaced by violence were reported to be on the move again this week because of renewed fighting in the eastern province of North Kivu. President Joseph Kabila threw more than 20,000 soldiers into a major campaign on December 3 to snuff out renegade Tutsi Gen. Laurent Nkunda's 3-year-old rebellion, which draws on some 4,000 disciplined and battle-hardened Tutsi fighters. "The secretary-general is deeply concerned about the intense fighting in North Kivu in recent days which has caused further suffering of the civilian population," his office said in a statement. "He is particularly troubled by reports of massive displacement and mistreatment of the population." The army, which is getting logistical support from the U.N. peacekeeping mission known as MONUC, initially made rapid gains in a two-pronged offensive before meeting dogged resistance in the rugged hills on the threshold of Nkunda's fiefdom. The statement said the United Nations, through MONUC, supported the government effort to establish its authority over the rebels in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. "The secretary-general calls on the government of the DRC to take all measures necessary to protect civilians," it said. "The secretary-general calls on the forces of Laurent Nkunda to lay down their arms," it added. The U.N. Security Council was briefed on the fighting on Wednesday, council president Marcello Spatafora said. "Members of the council expressed their serious concern at the humanitarian consequence of the recent fighting," he told reporters, adding that the council noted the "primary responsibility" of the government to protect civilians. Okabe said civilians were fleeing from refugee camps towards the provincial capital, Goma, and that the children's agency UNICEF and the World Food Program were distributing supplies and food

despite reduced access to conflict zones. She said the United Nations was particularly concerned about reports of rapes in North Kivu, where she said there had been 2,700 cases of rape reported between January and October.

### [Huge rally marks Hamas anniversary](#)

*CNN* – 15 December 2007

Hamas marked the 20th anniversary of its founding with a huge rally Saturday, sending a message of strength and defiance even as it is struggling to keep the Gaza Strip from sinking deeper into poverty. Tens of thousands of Hamas supporters gathered in a sandy lot and nearby streets, waving green Islamic flags. The crowd appeared to be at least equal in size to a march last month in support of Hamas' rival, Fatah. That rally drew 250,000 in a major challenge to Hamas. A large turnout Saturday was seen as critical for the increasingly embattled Hamas, which seized control of Gaza by force in June. Since then, the coastal strip has been virtually cut off from the world, with Israel and Egypt sharply restricting access, and 1.5 million Gazans have been driven deeper into poverty. Hamas was founded in Gaza in December 1987, after the outbreak of the first Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. It is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in Egypt and is seen as the mother of all fundamentalist factions in the Arab Sunni world. Large pictures of Hamas leaders, both in Gaza and in exile, were draped across the speakers' podium. A black banner hanging from a nearby building read, in Arabic, English and French: "We will not recognize Israel." In the crowd were dozens of members of the Hamas military wing, among them armed men carrying replicas of home-made Qassam rockets. Some 50 female members of military wing also marched, dressed in long robes and sporting military-style ammunition vests. Some covered their faces with veils, others with ski masks. Several took to the stage, waving green Hamas flags. In an anniversary message to Hamas TV, the group's top leader in exile, Khaled Mashaal, said Hamas will not abandon violence. "This is our real choice, our trump card, which causes the enemy to succumb to us," he said. He said moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who controls the West Bank, does not have the mandate to negotiate with Israel. "Our people are able to launch a third and fourth uprising until the dawn of victory arrives," he warned. After Hamas seized Gaza, Abbas set up a moderate government in the West Bank, winning strong international support and opening the way to the resumption of peace talks with Israel last week. On Monday, donor countries are gathering in Paris for a pledging conference, and have been asked to give \$5.6 billion to Abbas' government over three years. The United States said Friday it will pledge about \$500 million.

### [Report: More Libyans joining militants in Iraq](#)

*CNN* – 21 December 2007

More militants from Libya are turning up in Iraq, U.S. military researchers say. U.S. Military Academy researchers studying documents note the continuing predominance of Saudis among foreign fighters. But an "apparent surge" in Libyans could be tied to "the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group's (LIFG) increasingly cooperative relationship with al Qaeda," a West Point report says. The Libyan group officially joined al Qaeda on

November 3, according to the report, called "Al Qaeda's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records." The 30-page report reviewed documents seized in a September raid in the Sinjar area close to the Syrian border. The data at that time was called "an al Qaeda Rolodex" by one official. The report lists the identities of 595 foreign nationals who entered Iraq between August 2006 and August 2007. Of those, 244, or 41 percent, were Saudis, and 112, or 18.8 percent, were Libyans, the report said. Others were from Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Morocco and Jordan. The report said that previous research found no more than 4 percent of foreign fighters were Libyan. But the records indicate that Libyans began arriving in Iraq -- almost all by way of Syria -- in greater numbers in May. The report said that most of these recruits hail from cities in northeastern Libya, where "jihadi-linked" militants have a strong presence" and that Libyan fighters were more likely than other nationalities to be labeled as suicide bombers. The Sinjar Records indicated that al Qaeda in Iraq uses criminals and smugglers rather than its personnel to bring militants into Iraq. The university connection is strong, with nearly 43 percent of the 157 fighters who listed their occupations saying they were students. Other occupations were teachers, doctors and engineers. The average age of the fighters was 24 to 25, and the median age was 22 to 23. The age of the oldest fighter crossing into Iraq was 54 and the youngest was 15. "The fighters' overall youth suggests that most of these individuals are first-time volunteers rather than veterans of previous jihadi struggles," the report said. "If there was a major influx of veteran jihadis into Iraq, it may have come earlier in the war. The incitement of a new generation of jihadis to join the fight in Iraq, or plan operations elsewhere, is one of the most worrisome aspects of the ongoing fight in Iraq."

## **TERRORISM & COUNTER-TERRORISM**

### [Egypt 'fabricated terror group'](#)

*BBC* – 11 December 2007

A US-based human rights group has accused the Egyptian government of using torture and false confessions in a high-profile anti-terrorism case. Twenty-two alleged members of an unknown Islamist group, the Victorious Sect, were accused of planning attacks on tourism sites and gas pipelines. Human Rights Watch says its research suggests the security forces may have fabricated the group's name. It reports claims the case was used to justify renewing emergency laws. Although the state prosecutor dismissed the charges against the suspects, 10 of them are still believed to be in detention. The BBC's Ian Pannell in Cairo says this is just the latest in a run of accusations by human rights organisations against Egypt's police and state security apparatus. The Egyptian government has consistently denied that torture is used routinely and rejected what it sees as foreign interference in its own affairs. The authorities' claims made headlines in April 2006 when they said they had smashed a previously unheard-of terrorist group plotting a series of attacks against soft targets including tourists and Coptic Christian clerics. "Beyond coerced confessions, there appears to be no compelling evidence to support the government's dramatic claims," HRW says. "Indeed, it appears that SSI (state security investigations) may have fabricated the allegations made against at least some and

possibly all of them," its report says. Detainees quoted by HRW said they had been beaten and kicked by their interrogators, and some were given electric shocks on their bodies, including their genitals. Most of the testimonies in the report come via third parties, as the detainees themselves were unwilling to talk directly to investigators, for fear of retribution, HRW says. A spokesperson for the organisation said the case was not unusual, but was part of a pattern of detention and torture by the Egyptian security services in order to obtain false confessions. The "Victorious Sect" arrests came to light shortly before Egypt renewed its enduring and controversial emergency laws, which give sweeping powers of detention to the security forces. "State security needs to show that it's working, that it's useful, and cases like these are useful politically, around the renewal of the emergency law," lawyer Muhammad Hashim is quoted as saying in the HRW report. The group says the Egyptian authorities ignored requests for information about the case and there was no immediate response to publication of the report. Earlier this year, another human rights group released a highly critical report on Egypt's record on torture and illegal detention.

### [Twin bomb blasts kill at least 52 in Algiers](#)

*AFP* – 12 December 2007

Two bomb attacks have rocked the Algerian capital — one on the UN refugee agency — killing at least 52 people with foreigners among the casualties, hospital sources and officials said. Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attacks in a web statement posted on an Islamist Web site. The two attacks were carried out by Abdul-Rahman al-Aasmi and Ami Ibrahim Abou Othman, the group said. One bomb tore apart the front of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) building. A second blew apart a bus packed with university students outside the Supreme Court. Algeria has been hit by a number of bomb attacks this year — in which scores of people have been killed — and most have been claimed by Al-Qaeda. Interior Minister Yazid Zerhouni said a suicide bomber triggered the explosion outside the Algiers office of the UNHCR. The front of the red brick building was badly damaged and the UNHCR said staff were among the casualties. In the second near-simultaneous attack, a car bomb was detonated outside the Supreme Court as a bus packed with university students passed by, heading for a nearby law faculty. Security sources said the bus took the full force of the blast and most of the dead and injured there were students. The UNHCR office is in the Hydra residential district where the finance and energy ministries and several diplomatic residences are also located. Hydra is normally under tight police surveillance because of the number of foreigners who live there. Al-Qaeda's offshoot in north Africa said it carried out a series of bomb attacks in Algiers and other parts of the country this year which have left more than 100 dead. There has however been a relative calm in Islamist-inspired violence since September. The four dead recorded in an AFP toll for November was the lowest monthly figure since Algeria's Islamist strife erupted in 1992. More than 100,000 people died in Algeria during a civil war in the 1990s.

## [Rescuers search debris after Qaeda blast in Algeria](#)

Reuters – 12 December 2007

Rescuers scoured masonry and debris on Wednesday for survivors from a twin bombing in the Algerian capital that killed dozens and showed al Qaeda retains the ability to strike despite recent reversals. The group said its attack on U.N. offices in Algiers' affluent Hydra district and the Constitutional Court in nearby Ben Aknoun area had struck "the slaves of America and France". Seven people were pulled alive from the wreckage overnight. Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci told Europe 1 television the official death toll was 30, while a Health Ministry source on Tuesday said 67 people were killed. Algerian radio said the dead included three Asian nationals, a Dane and a Senegalese. Ten of the dead were U.N. staff. The second al Qaeda attack on the Mediterranean capital in eight months plunged many residents into nervous gloom, an all too familiar mood in a city of 3 million buffeted by political bloodshed during an undeclared civil war in the 1990s. The narrow streets of the hillside city, habitually clogged with traffic, were quieter than usual as many stayed at home. Over the summer security forces killed or captured the guerrillas who orchestrated the April blasts, but al Qaeda's bombing on Tuesday showed it retains its menace. Many of the few thousand expatriates in Algiers kept a low profile. The U.S. embassy said it was open for business as usual but was implementing "more robust security procedures while we assess the current security situation". The travel advice section on the British embassy Web site mentioned Tuesday's bombings and commented that "you should exercise extreme caution at all times". Al Qaeda's North African wing said on an Internet site that two of its suicide bombers carried out the attacks and that the United Nations and Algerian government were the targets. No independent verification of the statement was available. Al Qaeda's North African wing, which wants all foreigners to leave Algeria, claimed responsibility for the April blast and other blasts east of the capital this year that have worried foreign investors. Many Algerians are still traumatized by violence that began in 1992 when the then army-backed government scrapped an election that a radical Islamic party was set to win. Up to 200,000 people were killed, but the violence subsided for several years before spiking up again in late 2006.

## [Bomb kills Lebanese general tipped for army chief](#)

Reuters – 13 December 2007

A car bomb killed a Lebanese army general in a Christian suburb of Beirut, removing a leading contender to replace military chief General Michel Suleiman who is set to be elected president next week. The attack on Wednesday heightened tension in Lebanon where rivals are embroiled in a struggle over the presidency that has fuelled the biggest political crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war. Brigadier-General Francois al-Hajj, head of army operations, and his bodyguard were killed in the early morning blast that hit their car in Baabda, a wealthy area that houses the presidential palace and several embassies. Brig-Gen Hajj was the ninth fatality in a string of assassinations of anti-Syrian politicians and journalists that began with the 2005 killing of ex-premier Rafik al-Hariri. Politicians from the Western-backed ruling coalition and Hizbollah-led opposition denounced the attack, as did the United States, United Nations, France, Germany, Syria and Iran. The

United States, which cast suspicion on Syria for being behind some earlier assassinations, took a more cautious line this time. 'I'm not going to be pointing fingers at anybody today,' White House spokesman Dana Perino told reporters. Lebanese security sources said 35kg of explosives packed into an olive-green BMW car were detonated by remote control as Brig-Gen Hajj's four-wheel-drive vehicle drove by. Brig-Gen Hajj, 54, had been seen as one of two main contenders for the job of army chief, traditionally a Maronite Christian. The post would fall vacant if Parliament elects Gen Suleiman president in a long-delayed vote now slated for Monday. 'The army and the Lebanese people will not succumb to terrorism,' Gen Suleiman said in a statement. '(Hajj's) martyrdom strengthens us and reinforces our belief in victory and confidence in Lebanon's future.' Political and religious leaders said the killing showed the need to reduce tensions by electing Gen Suleiman swiftly. Prime Minister Fouad Siniora said the military was targeted for its role in preserving Lebanon's security and stability.

['Freed terrorists behind U.N. bomb'](#)

*CNN* – 14 December 2007

Two convicted terrorists who had been freed in an amnesty carried out the suicide bombings at U.N. and government buildings that killed 37 people, an Algerian security official has said. Rescuers in the shaken city Thursday were still extracting the living and the dead from the crumpled remains of U.N. offices in Algiers that were bombed by al-Qaeda's self-styled North African affiliate. Victims caught in Tuesday's twin truck bombings, which happened 10 minutes apart, included U.N. staff from around the world, police officers and law students. One of the bombers was a 64-year-old man in the advanced stages of cancer, while the other was a 32-year-old from a poor suburb that has produced many Islamic militants, the security official said Thursday on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. The government has offered amnesties to try to end a 15-year Islamic insurgency, resulting in thousands of militants turning themselves in, but sparking fierce criticism from the families of victims. Initial reports of the number killed had much higher figures, though the government insisted it had no reason to conceal the full tally. The attacks – and their targeting of the United Nations – drew international condemnation. It was the deadliest single attack against U.N. staff and facilities since August 2003, when the world body's headquarters in Baghdad was hit by a truck laden with explosives. That attack killed 22 people, including the top U.N. envoy, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and was blamed on a group that later affiliated with al-Qaeda. The United Nations provided a list Wednesday of nine staffers confirmed to have died in Algiers, including six Algerians, one Senegalese, one Dane and one citizen of the Philippines. A day earlier, the U.N. said 11 staff members had died. U.N. deputy spokeswoman Marie Okabe said Wednesday that was a preliminary figure and noted confusion at the scene. The Interior Ministry said five of the dead were foreigners, including two people from China, and that three other foreign U.N. employees – two from China and one from Lebanon – were hospitalized.

## DIPLOMACY & DEFENCE STRATEGY

### [Gates Plans Scotland Trip to Discuss Afghanistan With Allies](#)

*American Forces Press Service* – 12 December 2007

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates will travel to Edinburgh, Scotland, for meetings with allies with troops in southern Afghanistan, defense officials said here today. British Defense Minister Des Brown will host the meeting. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns will accompany Gates to the meeting. In addition to the United States and the United Kingdom, defense and foreign ministers from Australia, the Netherlands, Denmark, Canada, Romania and Estonia are participating in the meeting. All the forces are part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force's Regional Command South, which has its headquarters in Kandahar. The area was a Taliban stronghold and is an active battleground. NATO forces and Afghan National Army soldiers have been campaigning in the south. "RC South remains the focal point for operations in Afghanistan," said Geoff Morrell, Pentagon press secretary, during a news conference here today. "In fact, daily attacks have doubled since NATO's International Security Assistance Force took over there." Still, Gates is optimistic about the situation in the region. "Secretary Gates returned from his trip to Afghanistan last week even more convinced that the Taliban's recent resurgence in some parts of the nation is not a threat militarily, but is clearly undermining the coalition's efforts to stabilize and develop that country," Morrell said. Gates has clear ideas about what is wrong with the Afghan strategy and how it should be adjusted. "Over the course of the next couple of days in Edinburgh, he will have a chance to delve more deeply into those ideas with his counterparts," the press secretary said.

### [West opposes Russian push for more Kosovo talks](#)

*Reuters* – 12 December 2007

A push by Russia for more talks over the future of Serbia's Kosovo province ran into immediate opposition on Wednesday in the U.N. Security Council from Western countries who say such talks would be pointless. Most European Union states, the United States and Muslim countries say that with no result from past negotiations between Belgrade and Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority, the breakaway province should be allowed to declare independence. Serbia and its big power ally Russia vigorously oppose that. Russia handed its 14 Security Council partners at a meeting on Wednesday what it called "key elements" of a council statement calling for fresh talks to resolve Kosovo's status. But U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said Washington and the Europeans believe there was no "basis for a (statement), given that we fundamentally differ with the Russians on this issue." "The negotiations have been exhausted," he told journalists. "Now is the time for the (Security) Council to decide, and if the council doesn't decide there has to be a remedy found outside the council for the problem." EU diplomats said their countries agreed. "I don't think the Security Council ... will be able to reach agreement on the way forward, in which case other organizations will have to take the responsibilities," said British Ambassador John Sawers, adding that he meant the EU and NATO. Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin remained optimistic, saying he had heard

"some positive comments on some elements" of the Russian text. Kosovo has been administered by the United Nations since a 1999 NATO bombing campaign to halt killings and ethnic cleansing by Serb forces against the 90 percent ethnic Albanian majority in the province. The Security Council is set to hold a major debate on Kosovo on December 19. If there is no agreement, Western diplomats say most council members are ready to let events take their course in line with a plan drawn up earlier this year by U.N. envoy Martti Ahtisaari. Kosovo would likely declare independence early next year. The EU would take over police and justice functions from the United Nations and appoint a civilian overseer, while NATO troops would continue to maintain order.

### [Israel and Palestinians launch peace talks in discord](#)

*Reuters* – 12 December 2007

The first peace talks in seven years between Israel and the Palestinians opened in discord on Wednesday with the Palestinians demanding a halt to settlement building and Israel calling for a crackdown on militants. The tensions, coming just two weeks after a U.S.-sponsored peace conference in Annapolis, Maryland, highlighted the difficulties ahead for negotiators trying to reach agreement on a Palestinian state before U.S. President George W. Bush leaves office in January 2009. Wednesday's negotiating session was supposed to lay the ground for detailed talks on final-status issues, including borders and the future of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. Instead, the first round was dominated by Palestinian demands Israel halt plans to build new houses on occupied land near Jerusalem and concerns about Israeli military activity in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, officials on both sides said. The Palestinians said future negotiating sessions depended on Israel's response on the settlement issue, but they stopped short of threatening to pull out of the talks. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's spokesman, Mark Regev, said both sides raised concerns during the 90-minute session. "This process does not have a quick fix," he said. "It's clear the issues on the table will demand ongoing diplomatic efforts." The talks came one day after Israel carried out one of its biggest raids into Gaza since the Islamist group seized control of the coastal territory in June. Five militants were killed. Israel's army chief, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, told a security conference in Tel Aviv that a big offensive in Gaza may be inevitable, although he said smaller Israeli strikes were having an impact on militants firing rockets into Israel. The mayor of Israel's border town of Sderot resigned in protest over the government's failure to halt the rockets. The negotiating teams met at an Ottoman-era villa overlooking Jerusalem's Old City, with Israel's barrier in the occupied West Bank visible in the distance. While Israeli officials described the atmosphere as "tense," they said the teams will meet again in about two weeks.

### [Muslim helps Jews attacked on New York subway](#)

*CNN* – 13 December 2007

A Muslim man jumped to the aid of three Jewish subway riders after they were attacked by a group of young people who objected to one of the Jews saying "Happy Hanukkah," a spokeswoman for the three said Wednesday. Friday's altercation on the Q train began when somebody yelled out "Merry Christmas," to which rider Walter Adler responded,

"Happy Hanukkah," said Toba Hellerstein. "Almost immediately, you see the look in this guy's face like I've called his mother something," Adler told CNN affiliate WABC. Two women who were with a group of 10 rowdy people then began to verbally assault Adler's companions with anti-Semitic language, Hellerstein said. One member of the group allegedly yelled, "Oh, Hanukkah. That's the day that the Jews killed Jesus," she said. When Adler tried to intercede, a male member of the group punched him, she said. Another passenger, Hassan Askari -- a Muslim student from Bangladesh -- came to Adler's aid, and the group began physically and verbally assaulting him, Hellerstein said. "A Muslim-American saved us when our own people were on the train and didn't do anything," Adler said. Adler pulled the emergency brake and the train stopped at DeKalb Avenue station, where police came on board. The 10 suspects, ages 19 to 20, were taken into custody, said Brooklyn district attorney spokesman Sandy Silverstein. Askari was first handcuffed alongside them, but he was released when Adler told police he was not an attacker, Hellerstein said. Adler was treated at Long Island College Hospital for injuries that included a fractured nose and a cut lip that required several stitches, while Askari suffered a black eye, Hellerstein said. The suspects are to appear in Brooklyn District Court on February 7 on charges that include assault, attempted assault, menacing, harassment, unlawful assembly, riot and disorderly conduct, Silverstein said. The New York Police Department's Hate Crimes Task Force is investigating the incident, and will determine whether the suspects will be charged with hate crimes, Officer Philip Hauser told.

### [Sarkozy says Arabs don't see Gaddafi as a dictator](#)

*Reuters* – 13 December 2007

PRESIDENT Nicolas Sarkozy defended Mr Muammar Gaddafi's visit to France on Wednesday, saying the Libyan leader was not considered a dictator in the Arab world. Mr Gaddafi's first visit to France in 34 years has been accompanied by the signing of several business deals, and human rights groups and the opposition Socialists have accused Mr Sarkozy of putting commercial deals before human rights. Mr Sarkozy made a point of inviting Mr Gaddafi after Libya in July released six foreign medics convicted of infecting Libyan children with HIV. Paris helped broker the deal. 'Gaddafi is not perceived as a dictator in the Arab world,' Mr Sarkozy told *Le Nouvel Observateur* magazine. 'He is the longest serving head of state in the region, and in the Arab world, that counts,' Mr Sarkozy said. 'I share the conviction that France has to talk with everyone while standing firm on the values it holds.' Mr Gaddafi took power in 1969 after leading a military coup. Libya's ties with Western states have warmed since it scrapped weapons of mass destruction programmes in 2003 and agreed compensation for families of victims of bombings of United States and French airliners. But the visit has caused unease in France, where a poll this week found that six in 10 people did not approve of the visit. Rights group Amnesty International said Libya's return as an international partner had to bring real cooperation on human rights as well as trade issues. 'President Nicolas Sarkozy cannot satisfy himself with the conclusion of commercial agreements without obtaining concrete measures for a real improvement in human rights in Libya at the same time,' the group said in a statement.

[Russia warns of US missile shield retaliation](#)

*AFP – 15 December 2007*

THE planned deployment of US interceptor missiles in Poland could trigger a missile strike by Russia if those missiles are ever used, the Russian army's chief of staff has warned. "We are talking about the possibility of a retaliatory strike being triggered by the mistaken classification of an interceptor missile," Yury Baluyevsky said at a press conference broadcast on state television. Baluyevsky explained that an interceptor missile launched by the United States could be mistaken by Russia's automatic defence system for a ballistic missile aimed against Russia. "Who is going to take responsibility for an automatic triggering of the system if an interceptor missile is launched from Polish territory through Russia to strike down an Iranian missile?" "I don't mean to scare anyone but this isn't a scare story.... It's a technical detail that could affect the military stability of the world," Baluyevsky said. The United States has outlined plans to site 10 interceptor missiles in Poland and a radar base in the Czech Republic by 2012 as part of a missile defence shield aimed at a possible missile threat from Iran, according to Washington. Russia has said that there is no such threat and that the missile shield can therefore only be aimed at Russia. Russia has vowed to take measures to defend its security against the US plans.

[Musharraf lifts emergency rule](#)

*Reuters – 15 December 2007*

President Pervez Musharraf lifted emergency rule in Pakistan and restored the constitution on Saturday, in a move Western nations hope will stabilize the nuclear-armed state as Islamic militant violence spirals. Musharraf immediately pledged a fair election on January 8. But critics say curbs on the media and a purged judiciary will remain in place and they say he can still engineer an election victory for his parliamentary allies and secure a power base despite his unpopularity. Citing militant violence and a meddling judiciary, Musharraf imposed the emergency on November 3, suspended the constitution and purged the Supreme Court to fend off challenges to his re-election, which new hand-picked judges later rubber-stamped. But he faced international condemnation for his actions, with Western countries worried he would only further polarize Pakistan and leave a vacuum that Islamic militants fighting an insurgency near the border with Afghanistan could fill. Some lawyers and judges, including Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, who were deposed by Musharraf are still under house arrest. The Pakistani media criticized this week a ban on live broadcasts as an attempt to control election coverage. Many ordinary Pakistanis were also skeptical. On Saturday, Musharraf took fresh oaths of office from the Supreme Court judges appointed after he imposed the emergency. He also issued a decree protecting him from legal challenges over his actions during the emergency, something previous military rulers in Pakistan have done. Election monitors and many politicians fear Musharraf, despite calls for a fair vote, can rig the polls through a network of district chiefs, bogus votes and by excluding opposition supporters from ballot stations. Critics point out that Musharraf, who came to power in a 1999 coup but stepped down as army chief last month, still lives in his army house. The election is essentially a three-way battle between parties loyal to Musharraf and the

parties of two main opposition leaders, former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Bhutto. An opposition-run parliament could move to impeach the general over accusations he acted unconstitutionally in securing a new term as president.

## **DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY**

### [Army Looks at Long-term Need for Mine-resistant Vehicles](#)

*American Forces Press Service – 12 December 2007*

The Army has not made a formal proposal to cut the number of mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles the service will buy, but officials are looking at the service's long-term need, Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell said today. "It would not surprise me if (the Army) made an adjustment," Morrell said during a news conference. "You saw the Marines have made an adjustment to what they feel is necessary for their future operations. But I do not believe that a formal proposal has been put forth yet by the Army in terms of asking the secretary or anybody else to adjust downward what they wish to buy in the long term." The Defense Department will continue to buy as many MRAP vehicles as it can, as fast as it can, the press secretary said. The vehicles have proven to be life-savers on the battlefield. The armored V-shaped hull deflects the effects of improvised explosive devices away from soldiers or Marines riding in the vehicles. They've been especially effective against what the military calls "improvised explosive projectiles," IEDs designed especially to pierce armor. The department has contracted to buy 8,800 of the MRAP vehicles. In November, DoD received 809 MRAP vehicles. The goal for the month was 997. Even with the shortfall, the number was almost twice the 419 vehicles the department received in October. The December goal is to build 1,200 MRAP vehicles. "The good news is that we are well on our way to our goal of delivering vehicles to theater," Morrell said. The department's goal is to get 1,500 vehicles to the fighting fronts by the end of the calendar year. Through Dec. 5, the department had delivered 1,117 vehicles to the combat theater, Morrell said. "So if we expeditiously get those or many of those that we produced during the month of November to theater, we will get to that 1,500 mark and it will be to the benefit of our troops over there," the press secretary said. The vehicles are having an enormous impact. Very few American soldiers or Marines have been killed in an MRAP. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said getting these vehicles to the troops is one of his priorities. "There is a huge capability that's brought on when we bring those ... vehicles to theater, and we hope to get as many of them as possible as soon as possible over there," Morrell said.

## **NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY**

### [2007 data confirms warming trend](#)

*BBC – 13 December 2007*

This year has been one of the warmest since 1850, despite the cooling influence of La Nina conditions, according to scientists. The UK's Hadley Centre and University of East Anglia conclude that globally, this year ranks as the seventh warmest. The 11 warmest

years in this set have all occurred within the last 13 years. For the northern hemisphere alone, 2007 was the second warmest recorded. At the beginning of the year, the same group of scientists said 2007 was set to be the warmest on record. However, since the end of April, the La Nina event has taken some of the heat out of what could have been an even warmer year." El Nino and La Nina represent opposite ends of a periodic and natural variation in climatic conditions across the Pacific. El Nino events see above-average ocean temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific, while lower temperatures in the same regions are manifested during La Nina. The 1998 El Nino event, one of the most powerful on record, was largely responsible for that year being the warmest documented since 1850, and warmer than any since. The warmth of the years since 2000 is thought to be driving the thinning of Arctic sea-ice. Scientists forecast this week that the ice could melt entirely during summers by 2013.

### [Bali deal 'omits specific cuts'](#)

*BBC – 15 December 2007*

Negotiators at the climate change conference in Bali have secured provisional agreement on a document on cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The document launches talks that will end in 2009, but - as demanded by the United States - it lacks specific mention of targets for emission cuts. The EU wants to commit rich nations to specified emissions cuts, but the US, Canada and Japan are opposed. Some developing countries say they are being pressurised to curb emissions. The key aim of the summit is to set negotiations in train that will eventually lead to a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. Its first targets for reducing emissions expire in 2012. EU negotiators wanted this "Bali roadmap" to contain a commitment that industrialised nations will cut their emissions by 25-40% compared to 1990 levels by 2020. But this has been replaced by a footnote that simply references the figures, the BBC's Matt McGrath reports from Bali. Nor is there any mention of the need for emissions to peak in the next 10 to 15 years or for them to be halved by 2050. Environmental groups and some delegates have criticised the draft as being weak and a missed opportunity.

### [US sets terms for climate talks](#)

*BBC – 15 December 2007*

Delegates at the UN summit in Bali have agreed a deal on curbing climate change after days of bitter wrangling. Agreement was reached after a U-turn from the US, which had wanted firmer commitments from developing countries. Environment groups said they were disappointed by the lack of firm targets for reducing emissions. The EU had pressed for a commitment that industrialised nations should commit to cuts of 25-40% by 2020, a bid that was implacably opposed by a bloc containing the US, Canada and Japan. The final text does not mention specific emissions targets, but does acknowledge that "deep cuts in global emissions will be required to achieve the ultimate objective" of avoiding dangerous climate change. It also says that a delay in reducing emissions will make severe climate impacts more likely. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he appreciated "the spirit of flexibility" shown by key delegations - and was aware that "there is divide of position between and among countries". In London, UK Prime

Minister Gordon Brown declared: "This agreement is a vital step forward for the whole world. Environmental groups and some delegates have criticised the draft as being weak and a missed opportunity. The roadmap sets the parameters and aims for a further set of negotiations to be finalised by the 2009 UN climate conference, to be held in Denmark. By that stage, parties should have agreed on a comprehensive plan for curbing global warming and adapting to its impacts. This will include:

- emissions targets for industrialised countries, possibly but not necessarily binding
- some softer form of targets or ambitions for major developing countries
- mechanisms for leveraging funds from carbon trading to fund adaptation projects
- Earlier, consensus was reached on the principle of rewarding poorer countries to protect their forests.

## **MILITARY / PEACEKEEPING / HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS**

### [Niger army admits civilian deaths](#)

*BBC* – 11 December 2007

Niger has admitted that the army killed seven Tuareg civilians at the weekend. Niger's defence minister said the civilians were caught in a firefight between the army and rebels of the Niger Movement for Justice. A statement on state radio said the incident occurred on Sunday in the region of Tiguidit, some 80km from the regional capital Agadez. The government said it was "an accident", but the MNJ says the civilians were deliberately executed. The Reuters news agency says two of those killed were well-known Tuareg traders, named as Sidi Amar and Ousmane Sidi. The Defence Ministry statement said the civilians were in four vehicles which got caught in the middle of the skirmish. It said one MNJ fighter was also killed, and one army soldier injured. The MNJ website accused the army of having "very coldly assassinated" the seven people and denied any skirmish with the army in the area over the weekend. The MNJ has killed at least 49 soldiers over the past 10 months as part of its campaign for greater autonomy for the Tuareg minority in Niger's uranium-rich north. State radio also announced that two people were killed in landmine explosions near the economic capital, Maradi, in the past two days in what it said was a new "urban campaign" by the rebels.

### [Congress authorizes war funds and sends bill to Bush](#)

*Reuters* – 14 December 2007

The Democratic-led Congress authorized more Iraq war spending on Friday, sending President George W. Bush a defense bill requiring no change in strategy after failing again to impose a timetable for U.S. troop withdrawals. The defense policy bill, approved 90-3 by the U.S. Senate, also expanded the size of the U.S. Army and set conditions on the Bush administration's plan to build a missile defense system in Europe. The measure already had passed the House of Representatives and now goes to Bush, who is expected to sign it into law. It authorizes Pentagon programs expected to cost \$506.9 billion during fiscal 2008, which began in October. The bill authorized another \$189.4 billion for the Iraq and Afghan wars, for which Congress has already approved some \$600 billion. But it

does not deliver the new money. That is done by appropriations legislation at the center of a big dispute on Capitol Hill. Democratic efforts to amend the defense policy legislation to change course in Iraq passed the House of Representatives but failed several times this year in the narrowly divided Senate. Republicans, who used procedural rules to block the pullout plans each time they came up, were happy with the result. Senate Republicans are expected to try next week to appropriate \$70 billion to fund the war until well into next year. The Pentagon has said the Army will run out of cash for the war in mid-February. The defense policy legislation expands the Army by 13,000 soldiers to 525,400 in 2008. It also provides 25,000 more U.S. immigrant visas over five years for Iraqis who worked for the United States and whose lives are now in danger. The legislation placed conditions on Bush's plan to build a missile defense system in Europe. It stipulates that Poland and the Czech Republic must give "final approval" -- which Levin says means parliamentary approval -- to any deal before the project can go ahead. It also bars funds from being spent on the missile shield until the secretary of defense certifies to Congress that the system would actually work. The White House wants to build the missile shield to counter what it has described as a possible threat from a "rogue state" like Iran. The bill lays out a road map of military priorities, and directs weapons acquisition programs. Legislators earlier removed some provisions of the bill that Bush had objected to, including a nonmilitary measure to expand protections against hate crimes in the United States. The legislation also includes a 3.5 percent pay raise for the military. In response to complaints, it enhances veterans' health care, expanding treatment for brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, and assuring speedy mental health evaluations.

### [UK troops return Basra to Iraqis](#)

*BBC – 16 December 2007*

British troops have transferred control of Basra province to the Iraqi authorities, four-and-a-half years after the invasion. The handover marks a significant milestone towards Britain's final withdrawal from southern Iraq. In a ceremony at Basra airport, British and Iraqi representatives signed a memorandum of understanding to formalise the handover. Iraqi troops will now be responsible for controlling insurgents in the area, with British troops in a backseat role. British troops will now only get involved in combat if they themselves are attacked or if Iraqi commanders call for support. The 4,500 British troops still in Iraq will focus on training Iraqi forces. UK troop numbers are set to be reduced to 2,500 from the spring. BBC correspondent Andrew North said despite question marks over Iraqi security forces, especially the police, British commanders believed it was best for Iraqi forces to take the lead. Basra is the ninth of Iraq's 18 provinces to resume responsibility for its own security and the fourth to be handed over by British forces after Muthanna, Maysan and Dhi Qar.

## NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

### [N.Korea answers Bush's letter](#)

CNN – 14 December 2007

North Korea delivered a verbal response Friday to a letter President Bush sent to North Korean leader Kim Jong Il earlier this month about the progress of nuclear talks, officials said. Details of the response were not immediately released but senior State Department officials said the gist was that North Korea plans to hold up its end of the bargain and expects the United States to do the same. Bush's letter indicated six-party talks aimed at denuclearization of the Korean peninsula were at a "critical juncture." It urged Pyongyang to follow through on an agreement to declare and dismantle its nuclear program, according to State Department deputy spokesman Tom Casey. Casey said the Bush letter, dated December 1 and addressed to "Mr. Chairman," was intended to show the United States is serious about keeping the process moving. Bush wrote similar letters to Russia, China, South Korea and Japan, its negotiating partners. "I got his attention with a letter," Bush told reporters Friday, referring to Kim. "And he can get my attention by fully disclosing his programs, including any plutonium he may have processed and converted. ... We just need to know. As well, he can get our attention by fully disclosing his proliferation activities." North Korea is facing a December 31 deadline to hand over a document declaring its past and present nuclear secrets. However, chief U.S. negotiator Christopher Hill, who hand-delivered Bush's letter, said differences remain over what should go into that document, and it is unclear how "full and complete" it should actually be. Hill also said he believes the disablement is "going well."

### [Russia delivers nuclear fuel to Iran](#)

CNN – 17 December 2007

Russia started delivering nuclear fuel to Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant this week as part of a compromise effort to alleviate concerns over Iran's nuclear intentions while supporting Iran's right to a nuclear energy program. Atomstroiexport, Russia's nuclear power equipment and service export monopoly, completed the first stage of deliveries on Sunday, the Russian Federal Atomic Energy Agency said. The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Reza Aghazadeh, was quoted by Iran's Fars News Agency as telling Iranian state television that the shipment arrived Monday. The United States, several European nations, and Israel suspect Tehran has been trying to acquire nuclear weapons, but Iran denies its nuclear program is for anything but peaceful purposes. A recent U.S. intelligence summary concluded that, contrary to earlier suspicions, Iran halted its nuclear weapons development in 2003. Atomstroiexport, the Russian monopoly, is building the \$1 billion Bushehr plant under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations' nuclear watchdog agency. The Russian foreign ministry and nuclear officials said the fuel delivery was under full IAEA safeguards. A statement on the Russian Foreign Ministry's official Web site Monday said Iran had provided additional written guarantees that the fuel can only be used at and for the Bushehr plant, and that the spent fuel will be returned to Russia for utilization and storage. The fuel deliveries will be made in several stages over two months, Russian

nuclear officials said. The first stage was completed, officials said, when IAEA-certified fuel containers were delivered to a special storage facility, inspected by the IAEA, at the plant. The United States supports the Russian plan to enrich uranium on its soil, which is a compromise effort to alleviate Washington's concerns over Iran's nuclear intentions and Russia's support for Iran's right to a nuclear energy program. President Bush said he voiced his support for the program in a phone call to President Vladimir Putin earlier this month. The U.N. Security Council has repeatedly demanded that Iran suspend enrichment of uranium and has imposed limited sanctions on Tehran for refusing to comply. Russia, France, and China -- all permanent Security Council members -- have voiced concerns about the proposed sanctions. A recent U.S. National Intelligence Estimate said Iran stopped work toward a nuclear weapon while under international scrutiny in 2003 and is unlikely to be able to produce enough enriched uranium for a bomb until 2010 to 2015. Construction of the plant was expected to be completed in September, Interfax said, but was delayed because of lack of financing and delayed equipment deliveries from other countries. Atomstroieksport hopes to announce a new date for completing the construction in late December, Interfax said.